



VSB – TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF OSTRAVA  
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND BUSINESS

Relační marketing na trhu videoher

Relationship marketing in the video game industry

Student: Martin Šugra

Supervisor of the diploma thesis: doc. Ing. Lenka Kauerová, CSc.

Ostrava 2016

# Diploma Thesis Assignment

Student: **Bc. Martin Šugra**

Study Programme: N6208 Economics and Management

Study Branch: 6208T062 Marketing and Business

Title: Relationship Marketing in a Video Game Industry  
Relační marketing na trhu videoher

The thesis language: English

## Description:

1. Introduction
2. Relationship Marketing
3. The Video Game Industry
4. Relationships and Videogames
5. Netnography: The online research method
6. Online Community Research
7. Conclusion

References  
List of abbreviations  
Statement on the Use of the Results of the Diploma Thesis  
List of appendices  
Appendices

## References:

FOURNIER, Susan et al. *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2013. 456 p. ISBN 978-0-415-78313-2.

KOZINETZ, Robert V. *Netnography: Redefined*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications, 2015. 320 p. ISBN 978-1446285756.

ZAMAZALOVÁ, Marcela et al. *Marketing*. 2. přepřac. a dopl. vyd. Praha: C. H. Beck, 2010. 499 s. ISBN 978-80-7400-115-4.

Extent and terms of a thesis are specified in directions for its elaboration that are opened to the public on the web sites of the faculty.

Supervisor: **doc. Ing. Lenka Kauerová, CSc.**

Date of issue: 20.11.2015

Date of submission: 22.04.2016



doc. Ing. Vojtěch Spáčil, CSc.  
*Head of Department*

prof. Dr. Ing. Dana Dluhošová  
*Dean of Faculty*



## **Declaration**

“I hereby declare that I wrote the thesis and all its appendices on my own.”

In Ostrava on 15.7.2016

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Martin Šugra", written over a horizontal dotted line.

Martin Šugra

## **Acknowledgment**

I would like to thank doc. Ing. Lenka Kauerová CSc. for the professional supervision and relentless support of my risky ideas. Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to Justin and members of Tombraiderforums.com for being so open-hearted and supportive throughout the whole nethnographical research. Thank you for your time and effort.

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	6
2	Relationship marketing .....	8
2.1	Internet as a communication medium.....	8
2.1.1	Technoculture .....	10
2.2	The communal and the commercial, the history of RM.....	11
2.3	Communitas.....	14
2.3.1	Brand communities.....	15
2.3.2	Consumer tribes.....	18
2.3.3	Subcultures of consumption .....	20
2.4	Co-creation of value and brand ownership.....	22
2.5	Market mavens and commercialization.....	25
2.6	Social experience and network structures .....	27
2.6.1	Brand network orbit.....	27
2.6.2	Varieties of online social experience.....	30
2.6.3	Social network analysis .....	31
2.6.4	Networked individualism .....	36
3	The Video Game Industry.....	38
4	Relationships and Videogames .....	48
4.1	E-sports and YouTube mavens.....	48
4.2	Social media as a platform for socialization and RM.....	51
4.3	Distribution platforms as the ultimate relationship space .....	56
4.4	The co-creation process on the video gaming market .....	61
4.5	The relationship value of gaming and the communal economy.....	66
5	Netnography: The online research method .....	74
5.1	Ethnography and Netnography.....	75

5.2	The spectrum of netnographies (typology).....	77
5.3	Phases of Netnography .....	78
5.4	Netnographical research of the Tomb Raider Forums.....	84
5.4.1	Tomb Raider and video games: the introspection .....	85
5.4.2	Investigation: creating the research question .....	85
5.4.3	Netnography selection .....	95
5.4.4	Ethical perspective and pre-launch communication.....	96
5.4.5	The site selection .....	99
5.4.6	Inspection of Tomb Raider Forums: elements of socialization.....	100
5.4.7	Interaction: entry phase and techniques .....	101
5.4.8	Immersion: content analysis .....	110
5.4.9	Data capture: software tools .....	110
5.4.10	Interpretation: practical application of the method .....	111
5.4.11	Iteration: changes.....	112
6	Online Community Research .....	113
6.1	Inspection of Tomb Raider Forums: elements of socialization.....	113
6.2	Immersion: Content analysis .....	130
6.3	Research log & diary .....	144
6.4	Instantiation: results of research .....	154
6.5	Integration: recommendations .....	174
6.5.1	Crystal Dynamics & Square Enix.....	174
6.5.2	TombRaiderForums.com.....	178
6.5.3	Video game focused netnographies.....	179
7	Conclusion .....	181
8	References.....	184
9	List of abbreviations .....	197
10	Statement on the Use of the Results of the Diploma Thesis .....	198

List of appendices.....	199
-------------------------	-----

## Appendices

Appendix 1: My life and videogames, the self-reflection

Appendix 2: Introductory video transcript

Appendix 3: Online investigation about TR and Lara Croft

Appendix 4: Lara Croft, as imagined by her developers

Appendix 5: Questionnaire: The ideal Lara Croft

Appendix 6: Questionnaire: Statistics

# 1 Introduction

While studying abroad, Author of this thesis stumbled upon an interesting theoretical mindscape labelled simply as relationship marketing. According to this theory, the foundation of economy are people. They stand on both sides of the market transaction process, on the side of demand and supply. People rationally organize transactions in order to exchange value. They crave this value to satisfy their varying needs, including the need for interpersonal contact.

The connection between human beings is created by very fine fibres of socialization and transaction. The rational lust for profit cannot be considered as the only driver behind our consumer behaviour, nor is it the fuel of successful brands. And as this theory reveals, the longing for social connection with other people is typical for mankind. People want to link with others and form social groups in order to recreate the long lost need for tribal setting. Social structures, rules, and rituals exist in a world of spontaneous grouping. Members are interlinked through products and services, appreciating them far beyond their instrumental value, prioritizing intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics instead, using them as a mean for constructing one's identity.

It is necessary for marketers to focus not only on the perceived market value of the item/service sold, but also on the human agent that can stir the value proposition significantly. The thoughts of such marketing approach may seem contemporary at first, but further exploration reveals their deep, historical roots. The trend of human evolution progressing in a spiral-like fashion is acknowledged by the theory and utilized to create new, more suitable environment for such transactions. The novelty factor, which emerged with coming full circle up the imaginary spiral, can be seen in the mediation of these societal ties through the internet. A mighty tool that is capable of connecting people all over the globe is partially responsible for the return of the relationship orientation. And even though both fields are not entirely new, the combination of consumer-brand relations and the phenomenon of online reality makes an interesting cocktail, which flavours have not been completely distinguished yet.

Skipping to the practical part of this thesis, Author decided to apply netnography as the research method. Groups and their social interactions in the online environment are the main focus of the methodology, thus structures and bonds of the group are studied. The value that is transferred inside the network is unearthed and the goal is set to discover crucial information about the subject studied. From the perspective of relationship marketing, people who love a

brand willingly create a societal structure, a group. They bond through the brand, produce and transfer value and have their own motives for sharing “love”.

Being native to virtual worlds, networked individualism and English language, Author chose video game market as the main locus of the study. From his own brand love, he selected the legendary **Tomb Raider franchise** as the **studied brand** and **TombRaiderForums.com** as the **studied community**. Through both **qualitative** and **quantitative techniques**, the community had been inspected inside out, **revealing the brand’s relationship potential** and thus **fulfilling the main goal of this thesis**.

## 2 Relationship marketing

Since theories of relationship marketing, further referred to as RM, and netnography blend so well with each other, author decided to start with a novelty aspect of relations that plays a key role in any netnographical research, the internet.

### 2.1 Internet as a communication medium

It can be said that **internet has always been a tool for interpersonal communication**. Even though the technology didn't allow fluent conversation between two people or among group at first, and it operated mainly on a "read-only" principle, the fundamental thought behind the ARPANET network, as the first online platform, was to interconnect people nonetheless. With the evolution of technology, computers and mobile devices allowed this vision to be fully realized. Mark Stefik (1996) defined four pillars of this **information superhighway** (which was, as a term, first used in 1988):

- Online **library**: a repository of publishing and storing collective knowledge, a form of communal and collective memory,
- digital **communications medium**: a place for email and, eventually, many other forms of communication,
- electronic **marketplace**: a location for transactions of goods and services, including digital commerce, digital money and digital property,
- **digital world**: a gateway to new experiences, including new social settings, virtual augmented reality, telepresence and ubiquitous computing.

Travelling forward to 2016, it can be seen that all of those four fundamental metaphors have come to existence. For example, Wikipedia, as well as many other "**Wikis**", store collective knowledge about every imaginable object of reality and fiction. **Facebook** and other social sites are used as communications medium. People and companies trade their goods on **E-bay** and own e-shops and MMO games such as **World of Warcraft** stand for new, digital worlds. The existence of these communities was even predicted by Murray Turof and Roxanne Starr Hitz (1978), who wrote about how computers will be used for socialization, congregation and organization.



People can exchange pleasantries, argue, engage in intellectual discussions, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip and feud, fall in love, find friends, play games and flirt. As in-depth as these interactions may seem, Kozinets (2015) points out that the **level of emotional depth and interconnection can vary**. People are often engaged in **consociation** rather than in socialization. Consociation is an incidental form of association and it revolves around incidents, events, activities, places, rituals and momentary circumstances. As such, people communicate with each other “when the time is right”, for example when they randomly meet at music festivals, in classes at school, or in their neighbourhood. Such interactions only lead to **shallow relationships that need to be supported by further, deeper interactions to become social**. The relations created by consociation are of friendly character, but in no way strong. This brings a **different angle of view** at the theory of relationship marketing as the studied **online group** can be based on “what we share” principle rather than on a “who we are” perspective. It has to be stressed that 52 % of American community members, as of 2006, have met in flesh, bringing the fragile relationships to a whole new social level. **Being a member of an online community can, or can’t be quite comparable to offline communities** based on race, religion, ethnicity or gender. In a light of this finding, community members can be sorted in different categories based on their **level of involvement**. Such information should be taken in consideration during the data analysis.

Overall, almost 3 billion people access internet every day, whether it be via PC, laptops, mobile phones or tablets. Using social media has become a daily routine for many people, 63 % of users visit their Facebook profile at least once a day and 67 % of American respondents, as of 2014, think that the use of **such social sites has enhanced their relationships** with friends and families. Various media serve various purposes and serve as a platform for a plethora of interest and needs. *“For many people around the world, online sociality is a **part of their overall social behaviour**, even their everyday social behaviour. It is already familiar, mundane, and taken-for-granted. Normal. Natural.”* (Kozinets, 2015) From this perspective, people display real concerns, discuss real causes, and express real feelings.

It is essential, for sociologists, anthropologists and **marketers to adapt their research methods** to this shifting social environment and to **capture valuable data** and use it for further enlightenment. Whether it be in the field of online sociality, or for the purposes of marketing.

### 2.1.1 Technoculture

Cultural theorists Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (1991) theorized about the possibility of a networked sociality at the early stage of internet's development. Contrary to the idea of a collectivist utopia, that would see the network as a mean of creating a collective supermind where people would become completely de-individualized and transmute into a hive species, the technocultural view sees technology in a different light. **Humans are not determined by technology, they are co-determined, co-constructive agents.** With their ideas and actions, people choose technologies, adapt them and shape them. A transformative interconnection is thus present between humans and technology and that leads to the influence technology has on social behaviour and culture.

**It was considered that technologically mediated communication is inferior to its offline counterpart.** The absence of voice inflection, accents, facial expressions, gaze-meeting, body language and physical contact rendered the online communication and the relationships created as shallow and unsatisfying in the eyes of many. **This problem however, has been tackled by many new means of online communication.** Nowadays instead of simple text messages, people **use symbols, emoticons, avatars, moving gif files, memes, vines, videos, capitalization** and many other tools for expressing their emotions towards an object or subject.

Field studies of CMC (computer mediated communications) proved that people always find a new way of overcoming technological limitations, sometimes in a novel ways. Communication mediated by computers, mobile phones, tablets and other electronics proved the social experience to be thick, not thin as Daft and Lengel (1986) theorized.

Dubrovsky et al. (1991) and Sproull and Kiesler (1986) point out that **people would become more individualistic and self-absorbed, favouring the culture of me, myself and I.** Looking at social media like Instagram, Tumblr and even Facebook, this theory is not far from reality. People share vast amount of pictures, videos and information about themselves and their daily routines. Writing a blog entry, shooting a video or even taking pictures can consume a lot of time. The question is what intensions lie behind such activity and if it is truly a case of self-admiration.

One could argue that such technology undermines present social structures and that the newly created communities are not on the same level of importance as those created offline. The other argument was that hierarchy and social status would also be flattened out in online

interaction, where the environment is often anonymous and chaotic. Victor Turner, in reaction to above mentioned statements, distanced himself from the **classical term of community**. He **rejected** the thought that a community needs to be geographically limited. Instead, he uses a term “**communitas**” that stands for a **deep human connection**, a human **bond** without which there would be no society (Turner, 1969). Communitas are built upon a sense of **equality, kinship, sense of belonging to a group, an internalized sense of membership** that **fulfils the need for belonging, affiliation, acceptance and love**. (Kozinets, 2015) Communitas stand for the natural occurrence of anti-structure, disorder, disruption and chaos that were later on replaced by the hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions. (Turner 1969) **Cultures** created their set of **laws, traditions, values, rituals**, as well as **punishments**, enforcement and religious education. **Online communities**, as an organic outcome of one’s interests, seem more **natural** and their often chaotic character should not undermine their importance.

## 2.2 The communal and the commercial, the history of RM

Motivations for communitas, offline or online, can include interest in social change. People search for group of other people who come in a spirit of giving. **Communitas participate in a selfless act of sharing**, whether they exist in offline or online form. This may be a counter reaction to the process of **industrialization** that **lead us into the era of individuality and selfishness**. (Kozinets, 2015) People **try to recreate the bond that was once present in the past**, they try to **link** themselves to other people who are similar to them in one way or another.

Relationship marketing dates back to the pre-industrial era. The advent of **mass production** in the **industrial era** led to **transactional marketing**. The **development of technology** and the return of direct marketing on B2B and then on B2C markets led **back to relationship orientation**. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

In the **pre-industrial era**, direct marketing was used by agricultural, art and artefact producers. **Producers and consumers dealt with each other directly on the market**, which lead to emotional bonding, greater understanding of each other and to cooperation, thus **developing a relationship**. Producers were the sellers and buyers were the users of the product. This direct communication allowed **product tailoring** according to customers’ needs. Same bonding was applied between producers who sometimes dealt with specific groups of people

(like clans and families). The main goal of marketers was to retain customers and foster trust, they were oriented on relationships. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

In **early industrial era**, the relationships approach remained firm. The products were manufactured on a custom basis for rich individuals or industrial customers (clothes, jewellery, furniture, watches). Producers set their **permanent shops** and thus deepened their accountability and chances for creating **long-term relationships**. Both parties relied on each other. **Branding** became popular (family name became a sign of quality, it became a brand), like Kellogg's, Ford, Johnson & Johnson, Toyota etc. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

**Industrial era** oriented on **economic exchange**. They used middlemen, both buyers and sellers (wholesalers). **Focus** was placed on **economics, finances** and **risks** of the **transaction** rather than relationships. This change was necessary due to the **mass production** and **specialization** that lead to creation of specialized buyers, who understood the article and **separated users from producers**. Such middlemen were able to create a customer-friendly assortment of products, which satisfied their differentiated needs and **saved costs** for the producer. Also, the mass production lead to **overproduction** that had to be sold in different locations and middlemen took the risks of keeping the stock. They also applied various techniques of sales to sell the production, which led to **creation of advertising, sales, promotion to stimulate demand**. Overstock lead to market wars and **intense competition**. The main goal of marketing (middlemen) was to sell, they were **transactionally oriented**. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

**Today's technology** allows **communication with large bases** of consumers and allows **customization** of the product. The need for middlemen has been weakened as **customers and producers can handle some activities themselves** (like direct order made by customers, service help executed by producers, mass customization of products etc.). B2B markets returned to the direct interface, while **B2C** marketers try to stimulate such contact by **websites, call centres, CRM databases** and such. The long-term relationship creation allowed a **shift** from value exchange to **mutually beneficial value creation inside the network**, between suppliers and producers, between producers, between producers and customers and between customers themselves. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995) The shift in orientation is depicted with Figure 2-1.

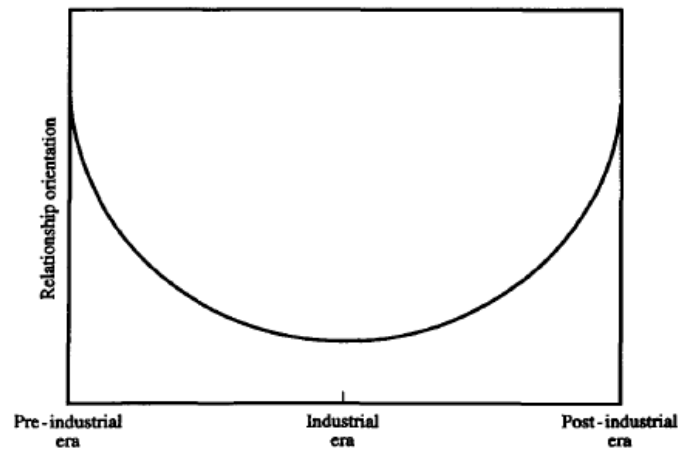


Figure 2-1: Relationship orientation through ages  
Source: (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

Relationship marketing is set to **integrate company's infrastructural partners**, like suppliers and customers, **to firm's marketing activities**. The desired result is a close, **interactive relationship** between these **value chain partners**. The relationship is then created by close **economic, emotional and structural bonds** between the actors. Such partners are **interdependent**, create a network, a value chain, and cooperate together to achieve the desirable **win-win situations**, rather than competing. The outcome should be a **better quality product and service**, because partners understand each other and combine their competencies, and also **lower costs**. The contrast between transactional and relationship concept can be seen in Figure 2-2.

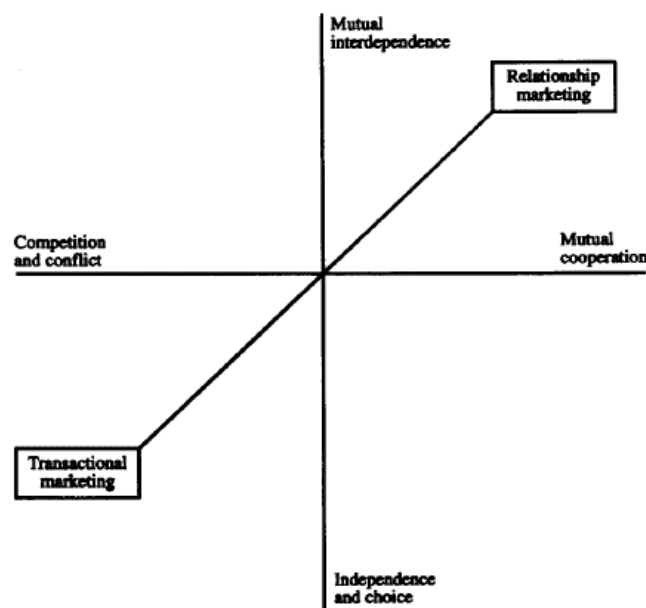


Figure 2-2: Contrast between transactional and relationship marketing  
Source: (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

**Transactional marketing** represent the “**marketing as a war**” methapphor, based on **competitiveness, conflict** and self-orientation (**independence**) in order to **create value**.

**Relationship marketing** on the other hand, represents the “**marketing as an interpersonal relationship**” metaphor, and is based on **harmony, cooperation** and **interdependence** in order to **co-create value**.

The orientation of the **relational approach to marketing** is:

- **on value (co-)creation** (co-create, co-brand and co-market the product/service “quality” together, which will lead to networks’ subjects satisfaction),
- and **process** (of value creation through long-term relationships and trust).

Meanwhile, the the **transactional approach to marketing** lies on:

- **outcome** (focus on gaining benefit from the transaction of values),
- and **value distribution** (among marketing actors).

The use of RM was fortified with the act of **sharing R&D cost** that emerged as a response to the need for customized output, which was then executed through close **cooperation** between **suppliers** and **customers**. This aspect led to **blurred lines between customers and producers who now cooperate and create value through the mutual relationship**. (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995)

## 2.3 Communitas

Marina Gorbis (2013) sees the **communitas**, and social media they use, as an opportunity to revitalize the principles of belonging, togetherness and sharing that were put against the solely transactional bond deriving from the marketplace. Tönnies (1957) points out that the ideal **societal relations** are built upon **caring, sharing, deep trust and interdependence** and that marketplace creates bonds that are more formal, contractual and socially distanced. The **market relations** exist on a sole purpose of **exchange** and the main objective of each engaged party is to get more than one gives. It is **not about the relation with and insider, but more about the transaction with an outsider**. (Kozinets, 2015)

Gorbis (2013) believes that social media provide a platform for people to form a voluntary network that creates and share knowledge, services and even products that are otherwise unavailable. People create their own **social economies as opposed to the market**, however **both can exist coincidentally**. Some of the **products and services created in these**

**social economies** are not available because of their novelty and innovativeness. However, some of them can border with activities that are prohibited by government, companies or by general public. Such voluntary activities are done **from sheer interest** in the subject matter and through the **collective creativity** and influence. A **project** can evolve from a favourite past-time or a school homework into a full-blown success. **Later commercialization of such communal artefacts** is not unusual either.

Author of this thesis adopted a three-level segmentation of *communitas* as Robin Canniford (2011) suggests in his paper. These are **Brand communities**, **Consumer tribes** and **Subcultures of consumption**. It has to be stressed that there is a fine line between all categories and, in some aspects, they may overlap. The crude differentiation would be that:

- 1) **Playful** and rather **commercial brand communities** gather around a certain **brand** and appreciate it in an open circle,
- 2) **hierarchical subcultures** form around a **consumption activity** that greatly alters their values and **lifestyle**,
- 3) and **tribes** simply take seemingly **unrelated objects and activities**, **decompose** them, **remix** them and put them together **for fun**, all at random.

Groups are described in detail in the following sub-chapter.

### 2.3.1 Brand communities

Brand community is **specialized, non-geographically bound group of people** that is based on **relations among admirers of a brand**. (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) It presents a certain counter-flow to the post-modern society, which was specific for people's wish to escape the old communities that enslaved them and stripped them of their freedom. (Cova, 1997) The societal bonds in modern era were being destroyed by mass market, technology and overall depersonalization and materialistic desires. (Cova and Cova, 2002; Muniz and O'Guinn, 1997) Individuals got **liberated** from the bonds, became **autonomous, egocentric** and strived for **showing their difference and personality through consumption**. The society got fragmented and the need for interpersonal contact weakened with technology. Bernard Cova (1997) stated that technology and the virtual reality it brings, has served as an anti-linking instrument. People have gotten more isolated even though they **forge multiple personalities** through a series of websites and online tools and probably communicate with a great number of people (as further described in the Networked individualisms sub-chapter). (Cova, 1997)



**Figure 2-3: The re-appearance of a traditional community**  
 Source: (Cova, 1997)

Nowadays, consumers wish to **connect with people who share the same values**, lifestyles, emotions and beliefs **through consumption** of products and services. They wish to **re-create the community archetype of the village**. They wish to recreate the link, but this time **without the spatial limitations**. (Cova, 1997) Figure 2-3 depicts the re-creation of a community, but should be seen as a spiral rather than a circle.

It can be said that **brands** enabled the creation of brand communities through their **symbolism** that **resonates** with individuals and that is **projected** towards society and **affects** its **culture**. Such symbolic values then **create a linkage** to other consumers who choose the brands in order to **construct their identities and choose their lives**. (Canniford, 2011) Bernard Cova (1997) said that “*The link is more important than the thing*,” which means that brands are being used as a **glue for contemporary communities**. Due to the **vast knowledge** of the brand, brand communities act as if they were the **owners of the brand**.

Members of these communities exhibit specific behaviour (that resembles past societal constellations): (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001)

#### **Consciousness of a kind:**

- Members feel emotionally connected to each other (they feel like they know each other),
  - *even though they are geographically dispersed and may have never met,*
- they share certain values, beliefs, qualities and personality traits
  - *,they know what values, traits and beliefs they don’t have,*
- they are aware that they belong to the community,
- they feel they are different from other communities,
  - *they can despise other brands and have common enemy,*
- they have their own fluid hierarchy based on commitment,



- *rarely discriminate based on gender, sexuality or race,*
- *and brand veterans have status of a leader.*

#### **Shared rituals and traditions:**

- Members perform sacred rituals connected to the brand and its use,
  - *have collective and individual process of product usage,*
  - *exhibit greeting rituals and other scripted interactions,*
- worship the brand as a sacred totem of the group,
- share own stories and myths about the brand,
- know the history of the brand, its origins and people,
  - *share love commercials, logos and advertisements,*
- participate and look forward towards recurring events.

#### **Sense of moral responsibility:**

- Members feel the responsibility to help other community members,
  - *assist with use,*
  - *share tips how to increase the performance of the brand,*
  - *help to repair and fix problems,*
- sense the responsibility to obey the rules and stick to the values,
- feel the need to spread the positive word of mouth about the brand
- and bring in new members.

**Compared to subcultures and tribes**, consumption communities are **aware** that their brand is considered to be part of the **mainstream**, they are aware of **commercialism** around the brand. They are self-reflective and can **admit** their materialism and **fanaticism** for the brand. (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001) Use of **marketing activities** against communities can **rarely disperse them**, unlike tribes who maintain the underground and elusive status. They don’t stand in opposition to a majority culture like subcultures. (O’Sullivan et al., 2011) Communities are also **more fluid** than subcultures (but less than tribes), there’s **no punishment for leaving** the group and also the **commitment** to the brand **doesn’t have to be extreme**. (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001)

Many examples of brand communities can be found. Apple community caters for wellbeing of its beloved electronics. Muniz and Schau (2007) studied the behaviour of **Apple Newton community** in the context of marketing communication. The community created artefacts such as documents, images and videos, promoting the long abandoned personal

digital assistant (PDA). It also provided hints and tips about daily usage for anyone remotely interested in Newton. Software tweaks developed by members allowed the expansion of the machine's functionality. Both created commercials and the software altered the meaning of the brand, deviating from the original marketing ideas that were suggested by Apple. The community owned the brand, they knew its official history and were conscious about how it should and should not be marketed. Members also exhibited consciousness of kind, created their own community logo, criticized other PDA brands, showed moral responsibility by helping other members and practiced rituals, such as taking pictures with their Newton in various locations.

### 2.3.2 Consumer tribes

Very **elusive** and **transcendent**, their behaviour and existence is **unpredictable**. (Cova and Cova, 2002) **Consumption** by tribes is seen as **a game** full of possibilities as they **consume a whole series of brands**, products and services. Members of a tribe are thus also **members of many other tribes and communities**. (Canniford, 2011) Their generally unstable nature practically renders **marketing segmentation useless**. (Cova and Cova, 2002)

The **ties** between tribe members are **loose** compared to consumption communities and especially subcultures. Members **don't feel moral responsibility** for each other, **nor** do they develop bonding **rules**. Consumer tribes tend to **play with marketplace resources**, but any **marketing** activities and pressure to go "mainstream" can **disperse them**. (Canniford, 2011) Communities react, **are part of and create** cultural **trends** by **deconstructing** and **reassembling products, services, technology and art**. They can be sometimes seen as an **underground** movement, which uses marketplace resources in order to construct reality that would **emotionally appeal to its members**. Like the house music tribe that organized outlawed raves. (Canniford, 2011)

Tribes are well known for **product tinkering**, exploitation and remixing. Television network posts an interview video of a woman who has just been a fire witness and, few hours later, the YouTube community makes a catchy music mash up that would set anyone's feet ablaze. Other honourable mentions include a scared cat singing the chorus of the hit Don't lie from The black eyed peas, Taylor Swift's I knew you were trouble mixed with a short clip of girl face-planting the ground after being pulled by her dog, or a re-imagining of the intro song from the sitcom F.R.I.E.N.D.S., done with Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Göring and Eva Braun and labelled simply as R.E.I.C.H. The frivolous pop track

“I’ll be there for you” plays in the background while screen showcases a rather happy looking video montage of people responsible for millions of deaths. Did the author laugh? Of course he did! The pure absurdity of such mash-up is a spectacle to behold when you consider the great amount of creativity put into it. The last example showcases how **inappropriate** can the **remix culture** be. Some Christians may get offended when they see one-to-one comparison picture of Pope Benedict XVI and Emperor Palpatine, the main villain from Star Wars saga. But deep down, everybody loves the screaming goat remix of Whitney Houston’s I will always love you, and honestly who wouldn’t. The main motive for such **daring behaviour** is the fact that **“it feels good”**. If there’s a funny video on the internet, remix for it exists no matter how un-remix-able it may seem. If there’s a **software**, office **programme** or a **game**, there is an (illegal) **modification** uploaded somewhere around.

On the other side of the coin, tribes’ activities require a **sense for entrepreneurship**. Hiring DJs for the house rave, getting the right equipment, renting a place to organize the rave in and to use social media to spread the word is anything but an easy task. Or in the aforementioned case of the lady whose house was set on fire, the person responsible for the mix uploaded it on iTunes as a buyable track and split revenues with Miss Michelle Dobyne who was the victim. Sometimes the activities can be seen as a rather **random** and **improvised conjunction of elements**. The final **output** however, **makes perfect sense** to many.

It’s hard to apply marketing to tribes, since they undergo constant change and may disappear before any marketing activity is realized. There’s **no point for segmentation** or any macro-social constructs. (Cova and Cova, 2002) **Marketers should work alongside the tribes, respectfully** entering into their tribal lives through the **seed network**. (Canniford, 2011) Marketers can support the tribe by giving them a **linking place**, a gathering site. Support can be shown by **organising, sponsoring** and **being present at events**. (Canniford, 2011) The activities shouldn’t be intrusive and should serve to **facilitate** tribes’ self-tailored activities. (Cova and Cova, 2002) The **company** should be always **seen as** a supporter, a **fellow tribe member**, as such it must remain **vigilant to stay relevant**.

The seed network is a complex **concentration of people** and **markets**; of **emotions** and **discourses** among them. The base for the seed network is the **platform** on which the tribal consumers can **play, act entrepreneurial, destroy, create** and **communicate**. Canniford (2011) gives examples of such tribes and their platforms. Among them are the knowledge focused **Wikipedia tribe**, realizing its vast and dispersed activities via a webpage

of the same name. Then the eBay tribe that serves as a self-help platform focused on buying/selling goods of any kind. The author of this thesis would like to add **Failblog/Cheezburger network** focused on spontaneous generation of memes, funny videos and other cultural commentaries. As long as cats and dogs exist, we can assume that its activity won't cease in a foreseeable future. **YouTube** should not go unmentioned either, as it is an entertainment powerhouse constructed by people for people. The size and quality of the output of these tribes is simply extraordinary and shows that humanity can actually work together to produce something of value without any major supervision or set of restraining rules. And just like the big bang created our universe, the **right agents are incidentally there, they clash and miraculously create the right mix. Miraculous.**

### 2.3.3 Subcultures of consumption

Subcultures present a community that is created as an **answer to unfavourable** and alienating **conditions in society**. Its members **counter the mainstream culture**, developing **marginal values** and **status**. Its members can be labelled as deviants, barbarians and **outlaws** for their (anti)social behaviour that can violate even the most rooted principles of the society. (Canniford, 2011) Whether **members truly act like outlaws or simply appreciate the ideology** is a thing for discussion. **Harley Davidson** members still maintain the **gang imagery** when it comes to leather clothing, beards and tattoos. But they serve as a mere **complement to the act of riding a bike**. The road formation they maintain while driving or the loud noises they produce to infuriate other motorists still resemble the outlaw archetype. But no nudity and sexual exhibitionism is endorsed, instead the group focuses on motorcycle safety and maintenance and also organises some family friendly activities. (Schouten and McAlexander, 1993) From a certain angle, they are somewhat caught between brand community and subculture.

Members of a subculture create community similar to the “**archetype of the village**”. (Cova, 1997) It means that subcultures develop firm **hierarchical structures** and **strong interpersonal bonds**. Unlike in consumption communities, members may be **obliged to protect other members**. The positive side of the subculture is that it often **ignores the national and cultural boundaries**. **Anyone can join the group as long as he/she indulges in the activity and internalizes the right values.** (Schouten and McAlexander, 1993)

Even the most mundane activities, such as gardening and fishing can affect one's consumption behaviour, including product choices, retail patronage, social interaction and

media usage. Relevant market categorization of people is not possible via the ordinary sociological constructs, such as age, class, gender or nationality, but via the **consumption patterns of individuals**. (Schouten and McAlexander, 1993) The members of subcultures **link through consumed goods** and form relationships that **give their lives a meaning**. The relationships and consumption activities are closely related to the **symbolism** and **ideology** behind them. With consumption, the person is **projecting these symbols towards society**, it resembles the **expressive function** of a product. (Schouten and McAlexander, 1993) **Gardening** could project love for the **nature**, symbolise the **creation of life**, channel **colour appreciation** or **affiliation with ecology**, while **bike riding** is clearly associated with **American culture**, lust for **freedom**, **attractive women** and **renegade** attitude.

Subcultures are maybe the most efficient when it comes to technological advancements. The unparalleled **devotion for the consumption activity**, and the **expansive time spent with it**, generates **ideas** about the **product improvements**. Schouten and McAlexander (1993) state that most advances in the **sky-diving** equipment has been done by skydivers themselves, including the production of these **innovations**. Similar pattern can be observed with the **surfer subculture**, whether it will be with surfing board modifications or new clothes design.

Such community has a **set of laws** and rules that have to be obeyed. **Violation** of the rules can be followed by rather **serious punishment**, even physical attack, should **drug dealers** be considered a subculture. Same acts of rejection may apply if the person leaves the group. Also the **membership can be limited to one group only**, as anything that deviates from subcultures' rules is looked down on.

Harley Davidson Community, as studied by Schouten and McAlexander (1993), also revealed that the community had a **strict hierarchy**. **Newcomers begin at the bottom** and have to transform themselves into bike personas. They **imitate other members** to do so, while **paying** them proper **respects** during socialization. By pouring further energy and investment into the biker image, members **internalize values** and the **lifestyle**, becoming **“hard-core” members** with firm social status. They gain the power to become innovators and opinion leaders.

Subcultures are rather **stable** but any attempt of **marketization** will **fragment** or completely **destroy them**. (Canniford, 2011) Once the **veil of mystery** and the notion of counter-culturalism is **dispersed with commercialization**, the community may **lose its appeal** to its members and the proliferation of lifestyle **“pretenders”** may even **infuriate** some.

Example being the **hip-hip subculture** that later blended with mainstream pop music or the **bodybuilding subculture** that has spread significantly even among people who don't necessarily live by its rules. (Schouten and McAlexander, 1993). The **ideal marketing** is done as an activity that **mirrors the needs** of the subcultures' members. Instead of forcing new product designs and trends, the **marketer becomes a member** of the community to **gather relevant information** about its preferences, while **gaining trust** and creating interpersonal bonds at the same time. And although members can share consumption practices the core thought is that **members don't choose brands, they choose lives**. (Fournier, 1998)

## 2.4 Co-creation of value and brand ownership

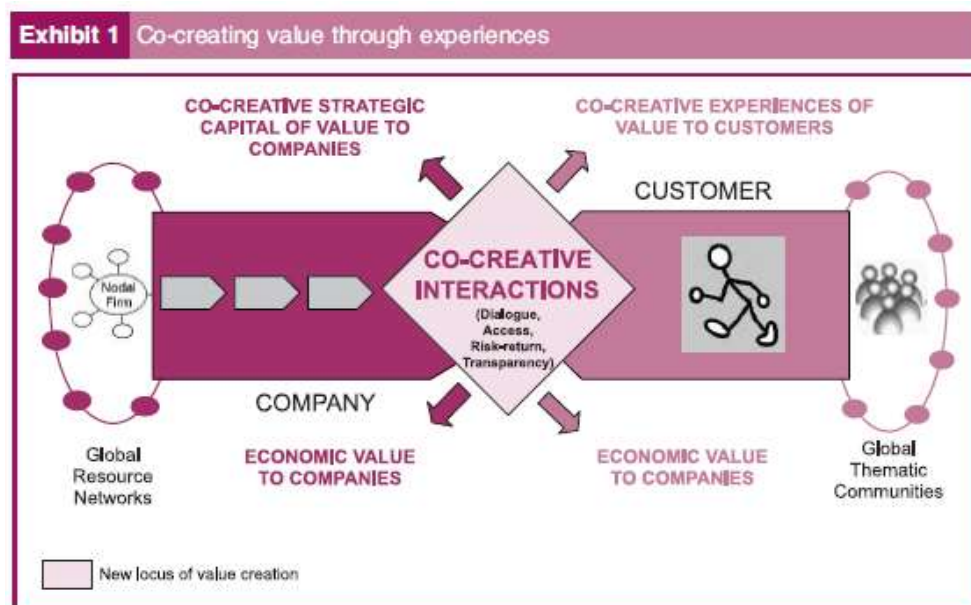
**Customers are no longer mere passive recipients of the value proposition.** They are **informed, connected, networked and empowered to participate** in the **creation of the value**. (Ramaswamy, 2008) This was supported by the development of **technology**, mainly by the spread of personal **computers**, **internet** connection, tools for web (co)creation, online communication and by the overall **accessibility** of the content. (Muniz et al., 2007) This technology allows them to easily **manipulate the given products and services** through a creative process **or create completely new content**. Consumers are then both at the end and the beginning of the value chain, **co-creating, criticizing, transforming and appropriating** the brand and its products. (Cova and Dallı, 2009) The **brand value is created through stakeholder based interactions and negotiations**. (Merz et al., 2009)

Brand community is much assimilated with **utilitarian, expressive and impressive value of the product** and thus they have the **extensive product knowledge** because of the **passion and experience** with the **brand use**. (Cova and Dallı, 2009) On top of that, they can produce **innovative** ideas how **to make it even better**. Community members generate creative content that is created by them **out of sheer love** for the brand and the symbols it represents. (Fuller et al., 2008) Members then share the created content among themselves mostly through the medium of internet and utilize all its available tools for its **creation, publication, spread, evaluation, discussion and improvement**. The web tools and spaces can create an integrated **platform** for all of the members, connecting them together and creating a **seed network**. (Ramaswamy, 2008)

Such network and its content is then a viable source for **product development and improvement**. **Creative and more open minded members** of the community like to

participate in product **co-creation/development**, those members who should be asked to help the company develop the ideal product. (Fuller et al., 2008) It also helps to **decrease the possible product failure**. Not all members of the community are interested in sharing their insights with producers, even if they have passion for the brand. (Ramaswamy, 2008)

It is then up to company to facilitate this consumer network and expand it to a **seed network** that would be **consumer centric**. It allows the company, its marketers and brand to be proper member of the network allowing co-creating of the value together. The **co-creation** process should be **led by Dialogue**, It should grant **Access** to facilitating platforms, remain **Transparent** with communication, propose and also enjoy the benefit of **Risk-reduction** that comes from information sharing. The whole idea is labelled as the **DART model**. (Ramaswamy, 2008) The schema of co-creation process is depicted with Figure 2-4.



**Figure 2-4: The process of co-creation**  
Source: (Ramaswamy, 2008)

One of the frequent **outputs** of the community is **self-created communications**, like **pictures, logos, videos, advertisement, slogans, music, stories** and so on. The content can **match qualities of official** marketing outputs and can be used for **free** if the consumer **grants** the company the **permission**.

The act of transformation of the brand is called **hijacking**, which means that the community **creates its own meanings for the brand** and **alters its marketing mix to its own liking**. (Muniz et al., 2007) Hijacking is often executed on company's adverts, both videos and posters and effectiveness of such communication often exceeds effectiveness of the ones

created officially, the example being Apple Newton community. (Muniz et al., 2007) They managed to hi-jack Apples adverts, often making ironic remarks about the abandonment of the product by the company, but also promoting the functionality and value of the product. Some values were never intended by Apple, like **new functions** for the device whose software can be **modified** and **enhanced** to handle more functions. This way a brand **new use for the product** can be discovered. All this leads to a fact that consumers own the brands, they can **complain, fight, negotiate** and practically **put pressure on changing the brand** to their liking. (Cova and Dalli, 2009)

**Brand ownership** is further fortified by the fact, that the **working consumer** is practically **responsible for any value creation**. Without his/her **immaterial output**, the **product and its market wouldn't simply exist**. (Cova and Dalli, 2009) Society and its members co-produce **cultural elements** (language, images, texts, symbols, ideas **and** codes) and **affective elements** (satisfaction, passion, excitement, responsibility, nationalism). (Cova and Dalli, 2009) These elements are **created independently** on the company, in fact they serve as the **primordial impulse** to company's own existence, as further described in the chapter Brand love. They **serve as a foundation for new markets, products and services**.

From the aforementioned information, the **community** and its members can be seen as **workers/producers**. Besides the **increased utilitarian benefit** they receive through consumption of an **adjusted product** and the **symbolic benefit** that comes from **social linkage**, consumers **also produce economic value** for the company, although they **don't get paid**. (O'Sullivan and Richardson, 2011; Cova and Dalli, 2009) On top of that they get **double exploited**: first by **using their knowledge** to help to develop and promote the product, then they have to **pay price premium for the "enhanced" product**. (Cova and Dalli, 2009) However consumers enjoy the co-creation process and are **happy if their creation is recognized** by the company. The company should **weaken the double exploitation** by cooperating with the communities and **rewarding them** for their work, **praise them publically, give prizes, give credit** and let them **keep the rights to the output**. (Cova and Dalli, 2009) This way a better transition from a primary level of sociality (transfer of the value among members of the community) to the secondary level of sociality (transfer of the value to the market) can be achieved without communities feeling exploited. (Cova and Dalli, 2009)



Marketer should create a **seed network** as a platform that can **facilitate** the community and its creative activities. The approach to community should be customer centric, bringing together **multiple subjects** that **co-create the value** together and create firm, **synergetic bonds** among them, along with a relationship to other customers, brand, its products and marketer him/herself. (O'Sullivan, 2012) The network then becomes "**one big and caring family**".

## 2.5 Market mavens and commercialization

It is clear that both the **social and market spheres** are somehow **intertwined** and can exist simultaneously. It is about the stance of the community towards its product, service and its members as well as about the marketing style that companies use, after they find the **communities' output to be commercially viable**. Certain examples of sell-out can be found in the history. In some cases, the values of the community prevailed, leading to its preservation. Sometimes the money offered by big companies was too generous to reject. The third and the most favourable option, **in the eyes of well applied relationship marketing, is that the buying company shows support and provides resources to the already established community**. This way, the group can continue on with their activities without alienating their faithful members, as stated in the previous paragraphs about value co-creation.

The content creation via the social media can be unfortunately **exploited by companies**. It is important to **adjust and balance the value offered** by both participating parties. If not handled correctly, social media economy can turn out to be a place of exploited labour, where consumers are docile, dupe and compliant (Cova and Dali, 2009).

Similar to this, many well-known **bloggers** took part in marketing activities of big companies. If done on random basis, most product and service advertising can be seen as another shape of collective sharing and caring. **Recommending a good product** or service, should the blogger find it potentially **helpful for the community**, could possibly end up in being **positively perceived** by the members. Individuals or groups who participate in **providing knowledge** about specific topic are **called market mavens or gatekeepers**. Market mavens are consumers who serve as gatekeepers for the market of their interest. Such consumers are **well informed** about the market's products and they **share** their view on them usually through the medium of internet. Mavens provide **genuine** information about the market, brands, companies and their products, thus being seen as genuine and **reliable**. (O'Sullivan, 2015) Although their image has been deteriorated with the increased commercialization.

Mavens can **group into maven crowds** who usually use **websites**, forums, discussion boards or **social media** to **share and discuss the gathered knowledge**. This way market maven crowds gain information that makes their members **consumption savvy** and **aware of potential risks**. By sharing such **helpful** information, market maven crowds are **shaping the market structure** itself, **influencing demand** for certain products, influencing the **quality** of the products as well as being a **source of new ideas and concepts**. They evaluate, negotiate and plot to make the consumption more safe, controllable and enjoyable. (O'Sullivan, 2015)

In the age of social media, the amount of people gatekeeper can reach is theoretically unlimited. Kozinets (2015) calls this commercialized gatekeeping a consumer-marketer hybrid and warns about a **potential tension** that occurs while holding these two sided **market-social relationships**. Should it be uncovered that it was part of a **paid deal**, of which the **community was not informed**, it can leave **damage**. Examples of **astroturfing, fake blogs and post** are not uncommon in the world of social media and can lead to **damaging the brand** or whoever participated in such deception. Damage is not done only on the qualitative level, such as goodwill/ image deterioration, but also from the simple quantitative perspective, including **government financial charges and bans**.

**From the marketing perspective, cooperation with communities** of any sort should be **planned** thoroughly and at the best, **transparently** towards the whole community members and the public. Companies shouldn't exploit market mavens just for "filtering" commercial information towards end customers. The main focus should be on **facilitating market maven activities**. Company should communicate with mavens and provide a platform that would allow mavens to share the information among themselves as well as acting as a genuine market maven alone, as the corporate market maven. (O'Sullivan, 2015) Marketer needs to strike a deal that would bring **value** not only to the company he or she works for, but also **for the community** that provides its creative spirit. This practice helps to build **sybiotic relationships** with consumers, not just customers, developing **brand awareness** and **reputation**, increase the **consumer engagement** that leads to greater **competitive advantage**, bigger market share and **profits**. (O'Sullivan, 2015)

The concept of social economy invades and expands mechanics of a marketplace environment as well as science, government, education, arts, health, tourism and any other social domain. (Kozinets, 2015) Whether it will lead to a greater efficiency in production, autonomy of an individual, democracy and deeper human connection remains to be seen.

## 2.6 Social experience and network structures

To conclude the chapter about the RM theory, the act of networking must be brought into the mix. Communities use the internet and its social media as their platform to link with other members and companies. The idea of network crosses the border of customer relations once the company decides to build a brand network orbit to align its activities with other companies on the B2B market.

### 2.6.1 Brand network orbit

**Business to business relationships** are often **overlooked** in RM, but are as much as important for brand **community expansion** and **development**. These B2B relationships have a positive impact on brand communities and tribes, **overreaching to the B2C** market. (O'Sullivan, 2012)

Together, companies create a **brand network orbit (BNO)** that surrounds the targeted brand community. **Brand partnerships** are more easy to do and **successful** in their impact **if** brands **share similar core values**. (Motion et al., 2003) It is of benefit when these values **complement each other**. They can co-create value, **enhancing the transcendent experience** that is so important for brand communities and tribes. (O'Sullivan, 2012) Together they have **more resources and competencies** to satisfy brand members and give them **opportunities to expand**. BNO creation represents and **ongoing process** that is **mutually beneficial**, ending in **WIN-WIN** situations for cooperating companies. They can for example **share cost** for **R&D**, **marketing** activities, **distribution** channels and also **compensate for their individual weaknesses**. (Motion et al., 2003)



Figure 2-5: Brand network orbit example on WSC brand community  
Source: (O'Sullivan, 2012)

An **example** of a brand network orbit is presented with Figure 2-5. WSC brand, a **beer pong community**, is in the centre, surrounded by **Bavaria**, a **beer brand**, and **Paddy Power, lottery and e-gaming brand**, joined together to sponsor an event. The beer pong enthusiast gathered at venue advertised through Paddy Power's own Irish Winter (poker) Festival and used the Bavaria beer and merchandise to play the game. This resulted in more people joining the Paddy Power event, in an increased demand for the Bavaria themed merchandise and in apparent interest in joining the community.

Participating companies can also **redefine brand identity**, **change its position** and **raise awareness** through the process of **conjoint marketing activities**. Such **publicly visible cooperation** is labeled **co-branding**. If the cooperation is extensive, this symbiotic exchange can lead to the construction of corporate **co-branded identity** and **relationship**, although the brand **names** are **being preserved**. The relationship itself then goes beyond economic dimension, unlike sponsoring, and has an emotional, tactical and strategic dimension. (Motion et al., 2003)

Companies who participate in co-branding **build brand equity** through:

- 1) Gaining **access to strategic capabilities** of partner organizations,
- 2) **aligning** their **core values**,
- 3) execute publically **visible cross promotion**,
- 4) gaining **access to stakeholders** of partner organizations (such as media, markets, distribution).

Companies usually cooperate to satisfy needs of their specific customers who also tend to be customers of the other cooperating brand, or at least use the cooperating companies' products in general. **Adidas** and the management of **All Blacks rugby team** joined their forces in 1999. (Motion et al., 2003) The team profited from the relationship in a form of a financial aid and good quality equipment. Adidas used the teams well established image, which still persists to this day, to strengthen the brand image. The team had an impressive win rate and managed to earn respect internationally. Besides "**respect**", other brand associations included "**tradition**", because of the Maori heritage of the team, and "**inspirational**" as they projected strength and humility at the same time. There were **similarities in core values of the team and the brand**. Nike was able to cooperate with **Apple** in order to enhance the running experience of its customers because **running and listening to music goes well together as consumption activities**. (Ramaswamy, 2008)

The co-creation of value can take a form of:

- 1) co-development of a product (Adidas + All Blacks rugby team = new rugby gear; Apple + Nike = new shoes linkable to iPods),
- 2) organizing events (Sony + Olympic Games = sponsorship of the event as well as special PlayStation 3 bundle),
- 3) creating advertisement together (Madonna + Versace = high quality brands, created ads with higher popularity for Versace and public exposure for Madonna).

The linkage among the companies should be based on their **shared core values**. (Motion et al., 2003) Both Adidas and Apple have strong brand names, produce and value their high quality output and they bear in mind specialized needs of their customers. A **quarrel in core qualities** of the co-branding output and processes would lead to mixed and even **negative results** of the cooperation. Such **linkage is important** because it is also **visible to the public**. (Motion et al., 2003) The output of the company bears **utilitarian** as well as **symbolic value** for its consumers, being able to bring benefit in terms of product **performance** and quality along with the power to resonate with consumers' beliefs, **values**, personality and aspirations. Providing **inconsistent or even contradictory content** to the brands' consumers could **negatively affect both brands** and their positions on the market. Author would like to imagine Chanel cooperating with KFC in order to develop a brand of a chicken-scented perfume. No matter how odd this may seem let us not forget that we live in a world where McDonald's sponsors sport events. Oh, the irony.

**In connection to** the B2C market and **communitas**, brand communities and tribes themselves **need resources to fully realize their potential**. Sometimes the **support** of the companies who own their beloved brands is necessary. (O'Sullivan, 2012) The tribal approach in B2B markets affects the B2C market and is depicted with Figure 2-6.

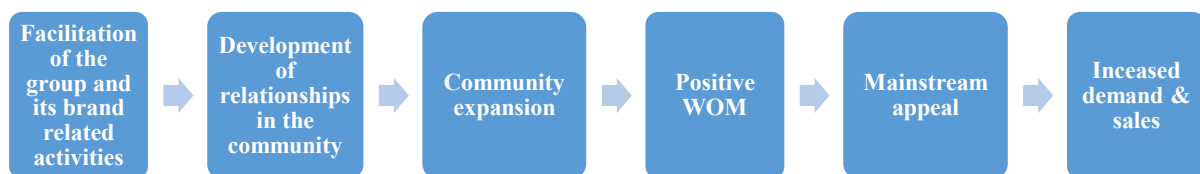


Figure 2-6: The effect of the tribal approach on B2B markets on B2C markets

Overall the co-branding efforts realized on B2B markets have their impact on B2C markets. They create facilitating brand-orbit around consumption communities and tribes, and establish synergic beneficial relationships among them, which in the end co-creates value (win-win) through the process of relationships building.

## 2.6.2 Varieties of online social experience

The depth and **longevity of relationships created through social media varies according to their type**. Kozinets (2015) presents a concept of four ideal types of social experience (the matrix can be seen in Figure 2-7). Social and market type of relationships, which were mentioned in the previous text, are used to distinguish among variety of experiences one goes through when using social media. Focus & orientation of the site is also bore in mind, signalling that a web can be focused on a distinct activity and interest, or the focus can be completely irrelevant to the user. Kozinets (2015) also warns that the **type of site** (such as forum, blog, wiki) **does not directly define its purpose and social experience it provides**, although correlation exists. And that's not all. **Many people use and experience the same site in a different manner**. The following classification provides a simple overview for a netnographer rather than a manual for marketer on how to structure a perfect social website: Kozinets (2015)

- 1) Mingling media enthusiasm: interaction done for business or necessity. They satisfy relational need of a person. Bonds created through this experience are rather weak, superficial and short-lived. Goes along well with the consociality,
- 2) hyving social experiences: social experience that is not focused on a single topic, project or interest. Can create strong, long lasting social ties between members,
- 3) sharing social expressions: revolves around sharing targeted information, news, stories, images, photos, jokes, tips and techniques about a particular activity or interest. Content on these sites is shared, rebroadcasted and exchanged. Just as mingling media enthusiasm, its character is consocial,
- 4) organizational social enterprises: revolve around a specific activity, topic, theme or project. The interaction is supportive, informational and content based. Sites bear some level of professionalism as the relation between members can be formal and transactional.

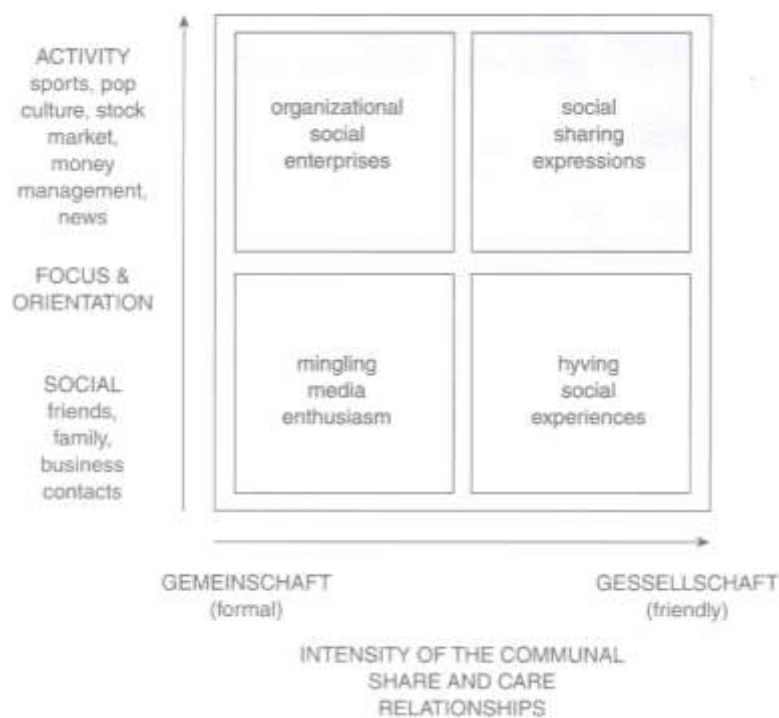


Figure 2-7: Four ideal types of online social experience in sites  
Source: (Kozinets, 2015)

### 2.6.3 Social network analysis

Social network analysis is often incorporated into the method of Netnography for several different reasons. Modelling is used to create a **simplified overview of the studied network**. Social network analysis is an analytical method that focuses on the **structures and patterns of relationships** between and among social actors in a network (Berkowitz, 1982; Wellman, 1988). The **structural maps** consist of **nodes and ties**. Nodes represent objects or subjects, such as persons, teams, organizations, bots, ideas, messages, products and many more, while ties represent relationships among these nodes. These can stand for information sharing, economic transfer of resources, shared affiliations, sexual relations, shared ideas, values, and so on. (Wasserman and Faust, 1994) From the perspective of Netnography, a group of people who are connected together through friendship, family kinship, job, shared hobby or common interest are considered to be a social network. (Kozinets, 2015) Textual, graphical, animated, audio, photographic or audio-visual **artefacts are exchanged in the online network as well as information, knowledge, advice or emotional support**. (Haythornthwaite et al., 1995) Qualitative data about relationships are the main focus of social network analysis, even though some ties can be quantified and statistically analysed. (Scott, 1991)

### 2.6.3.1 The typology of networks

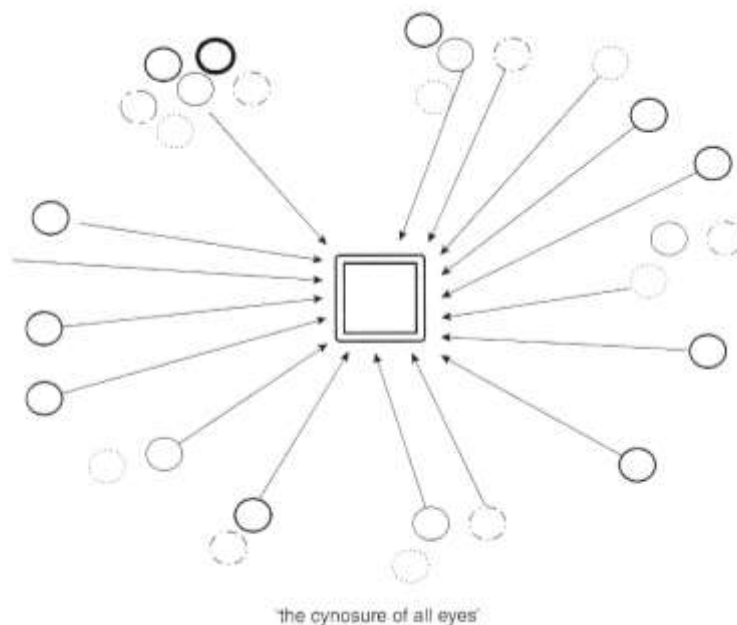
Although not being exhausting in its classification system, Pew research center conducted a social network-based research that identified six main structures of online networks. These six archetypes emerged from the way people shared topics and messages with one another via Twitter. (Smith et al., 2014) Each network is then topically, temporally and locally based. (Kozinets, 2015)

#### **Resource connections**

Are typical for a central source of information and consist of two sub-types

##### **The audience network model**

Is based upon re-broadcasting of major news and information. One information resource lies in the centre of this network, providing information to other, discrete subjects who then share and distribute the information to other people. The resource of information can take a form of a well-known media corporation such as BBC or CNN, or a form of a single individual or group that functions as a gate keeper. Popular YouTubers, bloggers or social activist groups can become the source of information for the masses. The level of intercommunication is low, due to the centralised character of the network and the distribution of information ripples in a cascade fashion. The people who share the information from the central subject then become information distributors themselves. The groups that form around these centres, and discuss the information, can be very disconnected from one another.

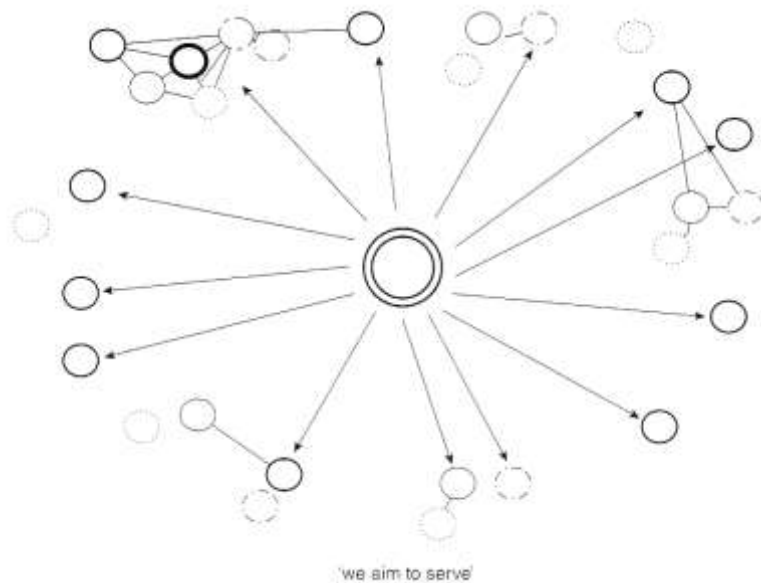


**Figure 2-8: The audience network model with the „central informant“**  
*Source: (Kozinets, 2015)*



### **The customer support model**

Similarly to the audience network model, one central agent provides surveillance over its profit or non-profit activities. The customer service, which is one of the representatives of this surveillance hub, actively monitors ties in the network, such as messages between people about the institution, opinions, experiences, ratings and problems. It seeks out to help individuals should they have issues with the company, its services or products. The hub also collects data about its (potential) customers, since it is inexpensive and easy to collect. Non-profit companies and non-governmental organizations behave in the same manner.



**Figure 2-9: The customer support (customer surveillance) model with the central observer**

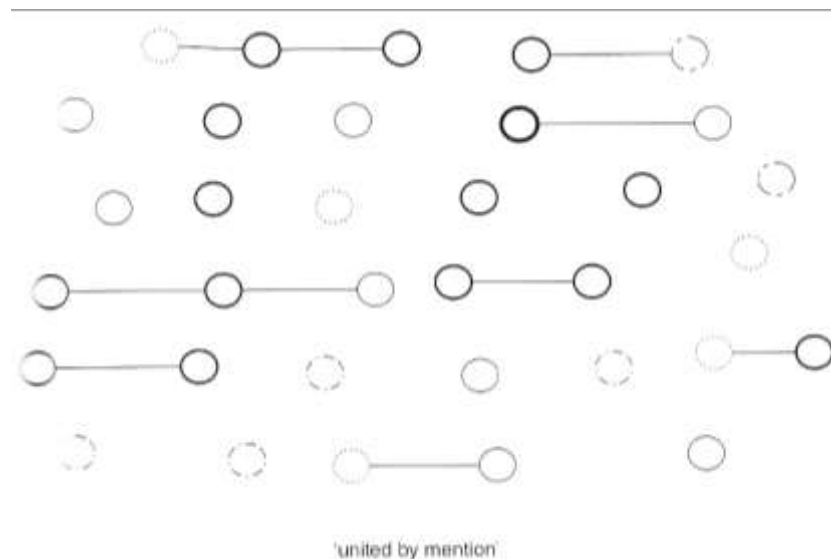
*Source: (Kozinets, 2015)*

### **Connections of interest**

Users post and discuss specific topics, but are separated in one way or another. These two sub-types belong to connections of interest.

#### **The topical cluster network**

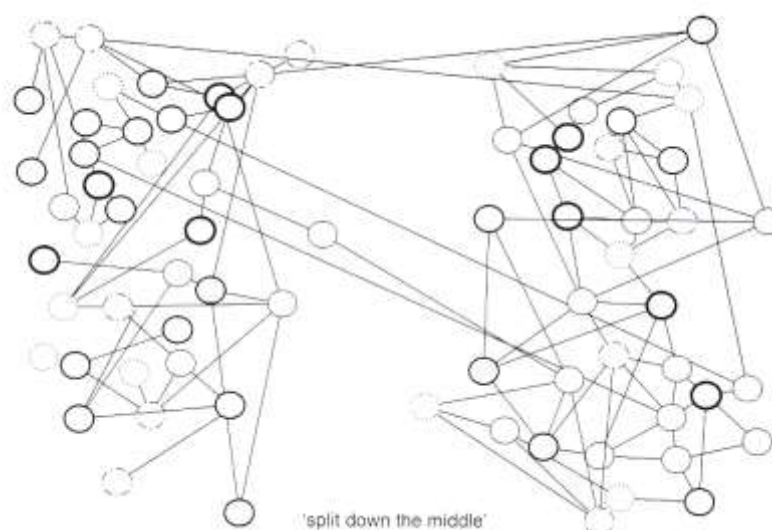
Carries a non-interactive type of conversation circulating about a specific topic. Participants rarely connect to one another and simply broadcast information. Kozinets (2015) points out that this conception stands in contrast of Muniz and O’Guinn’s concept of brand community, where members share these conversation about brands. Members of the network represent discrete nodes and are united only on a basis of mentioning a certain topic which they don’t continue to discuss further.



**Figure 2-10: The topical cluster network, typical for singular, facebook posts with a discussion**  
*Source: (Kozinets, 2015)*

### **The polarized issue network**

Stands for a group of subjects that are tightly connected and unified together. The network is called polarized because of the existence of more than one group discussing a specific topic. The theme, central to the discourse, may be the same for both groups, but they take a different view of the important issue and rarely interact. The groups are more likely to ignore each other than to participate in a direct quarrel. Groups' resources can differ and thus the information may vary according to their view of the world.



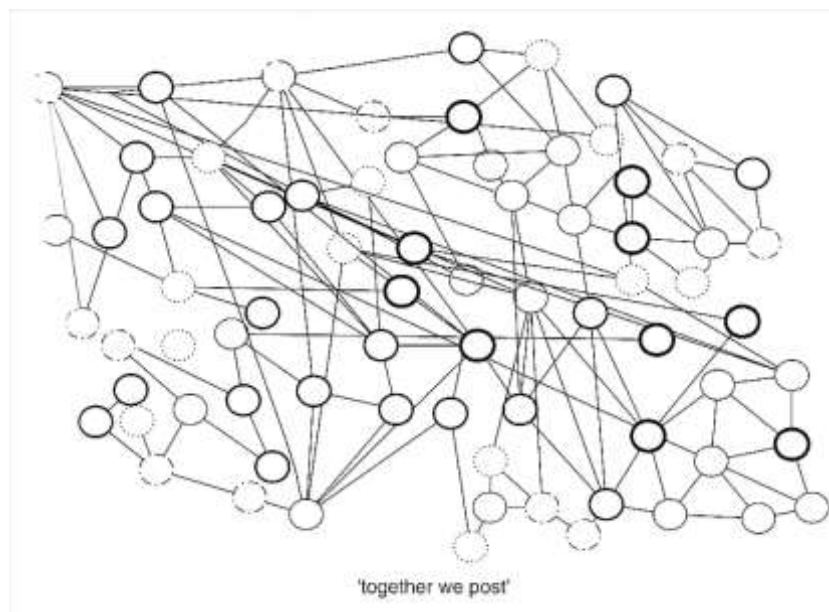
**Figure 2-11: The polarized issue network, where two separate groups discuss a topic**  
*Source: (Kozinets, 2015)*

## Social connections

The most social of forms of online connections. Members of the network communicate about a topic that has a significant meaning to them. The group is composed of people who know each other well, can be joined by newcomers and is connected to other groups without the prior knowledge of their existence. Hierarchy of roles is not uncommon for this structure and the subjects can have corporate or political interests and actively engage in shared projects.

### Tight social networks

The network arrangement that **fits the community concept the most**. Members are highly **interconnected** and rarely isolated, conducting **effortless conversations** about similar topics, responding to one another in a **coherent** manner. (Kozinets, 2015) Participants share **information**, and showcase **support** both **technical** and **emotional**. In many ways, the principles of this system are similar to the interaction done with family and friends.



**Figure 2-12: Tight social networks, a place where users interconnect**  
*Source: (Kozinets, 2015)*

### The interest group alliance network

Are complex in nature and consolidate many different, smaller groups around a widely shared topic. Such alliances are **elusive** and can disperse quickly, gathering information from “the **underground**”. Linked to the relationship marketing theory, this form of structure applies to **consumer tribes**. The relationships may **not** be **as strong** as in tight social networks and many members can stick to **multiple centres of activity** within the structure, to many topics. This deepens the **ever-shifting** landscape that is hard to grasp by a marketer or netnographer.

The core is long-lasting, but its precise shape is not. **Membership** of a sub-group **doesn't deny access to any other groups** inside the network. Again similarity to consumer tribes can be seen.

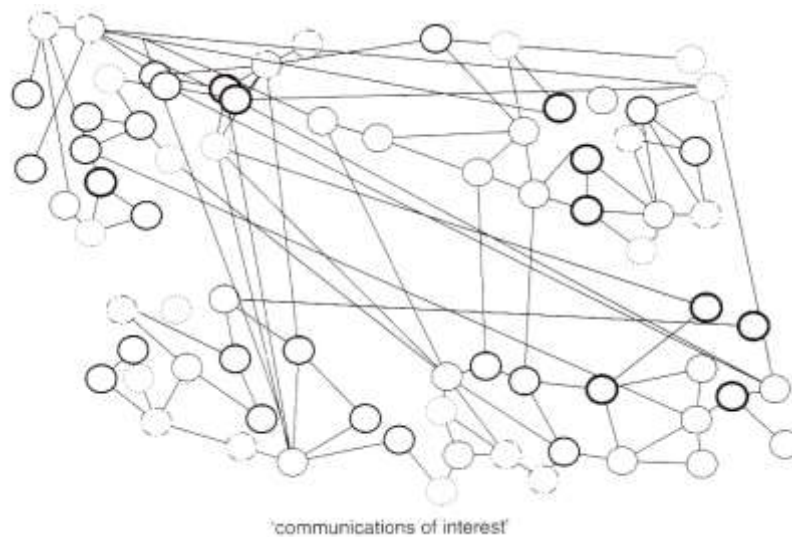


Figure 2-13: The interest group alliance network, a temporarily created network  
Source: (Kozinets, 2015)

#### 2.6.4 Networked individualism

In conclusion to networks, the term networked individualism can be encountered. According to Castells (1996) these social media and **networks** they help to **create and enhance individualistic tendencies** as they allow person to become a **member of independent groups with no apparent connections to each other**. Lee Rainie (Rainie and Wellman, 2012) suggest that one can escape from the tight bonds of traditional family and neighbourhood into more loose and less-tight online networks. This allows one to **take different roles and positions in different groups** as well as keeping ones individuality inside the group that doesn't constrain as much as the common, offline format. Lysloff (2003) goes even further, stating that a person can have **multiple, fragmented personalities across these social networks**. In a sense, it enables the existence of multiple and **sometimes idealized selves through the social media**.

Rainie and Wellman (2012) define 12 principles of networked individuality:

1. Networked individuals reach out to many separate groups instead of relying on more intimate connections with selected few,
2. they maintain partial membership in many networks, instead of permanent membership in established groups,
3. technology accelerates the trend and allows quick access to such online social structures,

4. the internet represents a new neighbourhood, with a variety of contacts throughout the world wide network,
5. it allows one to fully project his or her vision and voice opinions, invite other people to their own world, should they feel connection with one another,
6. lines between communication, information and action have become blurred. People access the information instantly and then act upon it,
7. high mobility of identity is possible due to the possibility of belonging to different groups, circulating around different passions, beliefs, lifestyles, hobbies, subcultures and so on,
8. less formal peer-to-peer relationships are easily sustainable at work, hierarchy of positions is not that palpable,
9. home and work are more intertwined,
10. public and private spheres are more intertwined,
11. new life expectations emerge as people's privacy become more available and transparent through post on social media,
12. due to the flattened out hierarchy, ocean of information and looser relationships, it is hard to decide, which information is to be trusted.

This surely represents a change in a traditional interpretation of social groups and marketers should keep that in mind while dealing with online communities. A connection to the platform of support can be spotted through the lens of relationship marketing. **Company should provide tools that each and every individual (brand) can use for their own self-expression rather than to present a rigid set of values**, even though patterns of behaviour exist.

### 3 The Video Game Industry

Few markets have gone through such turbulent changes as the video game industry has. Over the **65 years of its existence**, videogames have evolved into a worldwide phenomenon that is enjoyed by millions of people around the globe. The fruit of its **rapid development** can be experienced on a daily basis, as it is closely **related to information technologies** and the wide array of entertainment electronics. Long gone are the days when video games were considered to be a fad that will eventually sink into oblivion. They have managed the unimaginable as they took their rightful place in human history **alongside music, books and movies**. They have become an entertainment medium, possessing as much **cultural symbolism** as its predecessors and later, as the **complexity of games evolved**, incorporated all three of them into one package, as is shown in Figure 3-1. From the simplistic, pixel graphics of Pong we now stand on a brink of virtual reality and visuals that border with photorealism. This overwhelming immersion in the industry's products cannot be overlooked and has to be studied to fully understand its impact on humanity. Any scholar from any field of study can find his/her own area of interest, because video games encapsulate many aspects of reality such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, finances, marketing, management, arts, engineering and many more.



Figure 3-1: The synchronisation process of the entertainment industry

The video game market is now **split across multiple segments** that have emerged along developments in technology. The biggest share (**37 % of total revenues**) is represented by **PC gaming**, whether it would be traditional computer games or those played in a web browser. **TV based gaming**, which includes **consoles** and **virtual reality**, takes the second biggest slice



of the pie (27 %), but is followed closely with **gaming on smartphones and smart watches (23 %)**. **Handheld** and **tablet gaming** presents the smallest market share (13 %). All can be seen in Figure 3-2.

Beyond the share alone, Newzoo's analysis demonstrates that **mobile gaming** is still **growing (+21 %)** and that **PC gaming** is nowhere near a marginal past time (+7%). The more shocking it is to see how some developers handle their PC releases during the eight generation of gaming. China and India are driving the growth of PC market and are expected to do so in following years. It is also visible that handheld game segment is starving for a new device and that it would be viable to replace the aging Nintendo 3DS with a new, portable console. If the **segment of tablets and smart devices is combined**, it is clearly seen that it accounts for **33 % of the market** and is the **main reason behind its growth**.

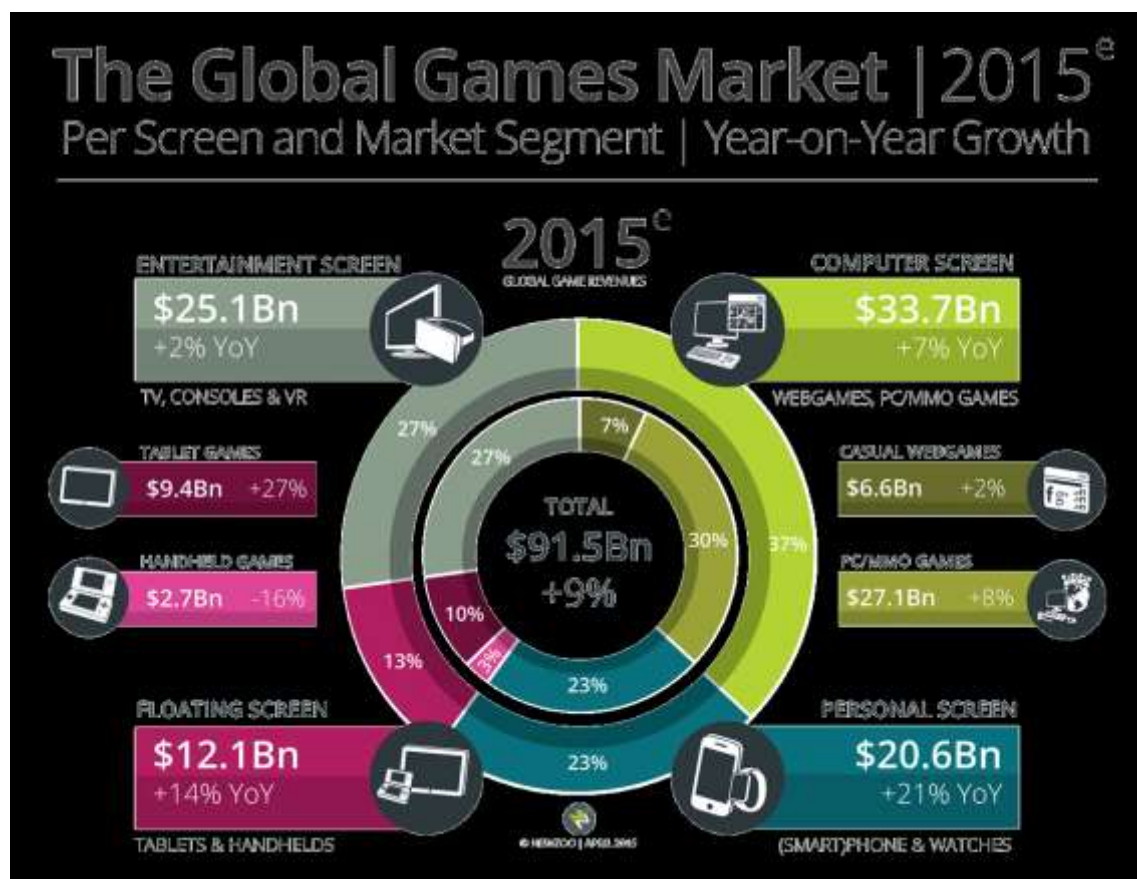
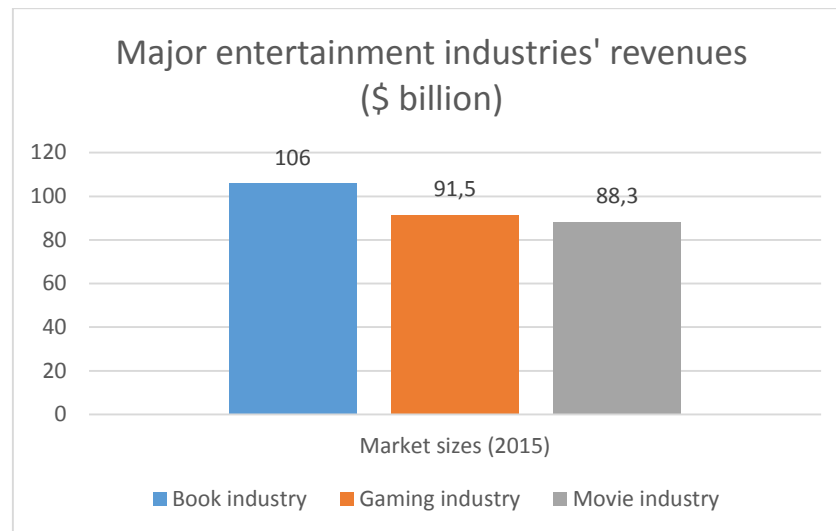


Figure 3-2: The global games market in 2015  
Source: (Newzoo 1, 2015)

What is quintessential however, is the size of the market as such. **Video game market** was **worth \$91.5 billion in 2015, increasing by another 9 %** from 2014. In comparison, music industry had annual revenues of \$15 billion in 2015, filmed entertainment \$88.3, and book industry grew by just 0.7 % to \$106 billion. (IFPI, 2016; Statista, 2016; IBISWorld, 2016) As

mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, gaming is not a past-time for a niche market, it is part of the world's culture, as displayed in Figure 3-3.



**Figure 3-3: Worldwide revenues of three, major entertainment industries**  
Source: Based on (IFPI, 2016; Statista, 2016; IBISWorld, 2016)

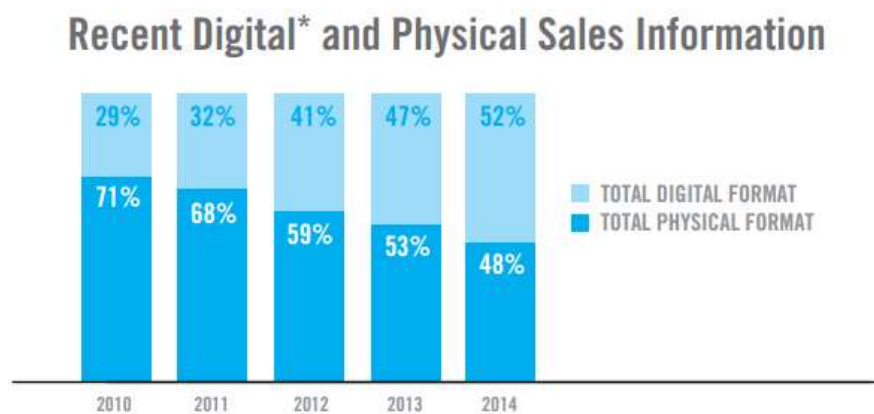
The growth is driven immensely by China, Asia in general, and Latin America. Combined, these continents account for **50% of the industry's revenues**, as shown in Figure 3-4. China is also prominent in mobile gaming, where it is destined to surpass US in near future.



**Figure 3-4: Share on video game industry revenue per region**  
Source: (Newzoo 1, 2015)



**PC market still grows** and it is caused by many reasons. One of the reasons is the **convenient way of distribution**. **Steam**, a gaming platform that was founded in 2003 by legendary game developer **Valve**, controls about **15% of PC gaming revenues**, which would equal to **\$3.5 billion as of 2015**. (Mahesh VC, 2016) Steam and other distribution platforms and websites offer players games at **lower prices than** of its **console** counterparts. **Periodic sales** on those platforms make **PC gaming cheaper**, it is also endlessly **backwards compatible** and **highly social**. Steam has its own community that engages in game curation, content creation and socialization. **Digital gaming** accounts for **\$61 billion across all platforms**, which makes about **66 % of all sales as of 2015**. (Dreunen, 2016 ) The growth of digital segment can be seen in Figure 3-5 (the research was done for America, but similarity with global statistics can be expected).



**Figure 3-5: The increasing share of digital distribution of video games**  
*Source: (ESA, 2015)*

The **second reason for PC growth** would be the **trend of e-sports**. There are over **260 million consumers watching other gamers play** and **broadcast** their footage on **YouTube, Twitch** or other **streaming service**, as depicted in Figure 3-6. Since computers are so versatile and equipped with useful video capturing and editing tools, it is only natural that streaming there would be easier to perform. The **audience** is still **growing**, by **27 % from 2014**, and about **40 %** of them are **non-gamers**. **YouTube gaming** videos account for **3.5 billion views each month**, which means that nearly one day of YouTubing is dedicated to gaming. (Mahesh VC, 2016; Lofgren, 2016)



**Figure 3-6: The global esports market in 2015**  
Source: (Newzoo 2, 2015)

Companies also seem to be keen of e-sports and sponsor gaming teams, send streamers gifts, invite them to events and, in case of matches, provide prizes. South Korea has been a leader in e-sports, especially in Blizzard's sci-fi strategy Starcraft, but governmental bans and internal quarrels with Blizzard slowed its prominence in favour of US and China, who are in the lead of streaming and competitive gaming as seen in figure xy. The **total prize money** has raised to **\$71 million as of 2015**, as seen in Figure 3-7. For better understanding of the trend, Valve's **DOTA 2 championship** has **crowdsourced \$10 million** as a **pay-out for winners** and is **expected to reach \$15 million** in the next championship. The biggest host for live events and streaming, **Major League Gaming**, has **9 million registered users** and attracted **18,000 attendants** and **2,000,000 online spectators** in its **2014 championship event**. E-sports is a fun **past-time** for many, a **job** for few, and a viable **marketing opportunity** for companies. (Newzoo 2, 2015; Lofgren, 2015).



Figure 3-7: Esports pay-out evolution for winners

Source: (Newzoo 1, 2015)

There are about **1,909,447,999 gamers around the globe** and there is a fine **balance between male and female** gamers as well as between **different age groups** as seen in Figure 3 -8. The **average gamer is 35 years old**, which corresponds to the age of average male gamers. Ladies are quite older on average and indulge in gaming at the age of 43. It is no wonder why Nintendo succeeded with delivering Wii consoles and with casual titles for mums. The **average years spend with gaming then equal to 13**, which is a good sign for **fostering brand relationships**.

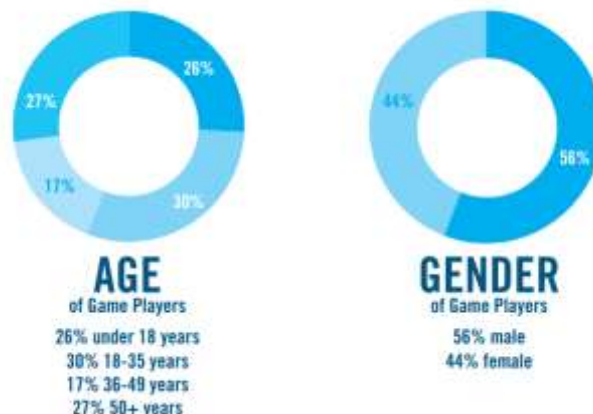


Figure 3-8: The gender and age structure of gamers

Source: (ESA, 2015)

The most favourite genre to play is action, followed by shooter, sports, RPG and Adventure as seen in Figure 3-9.

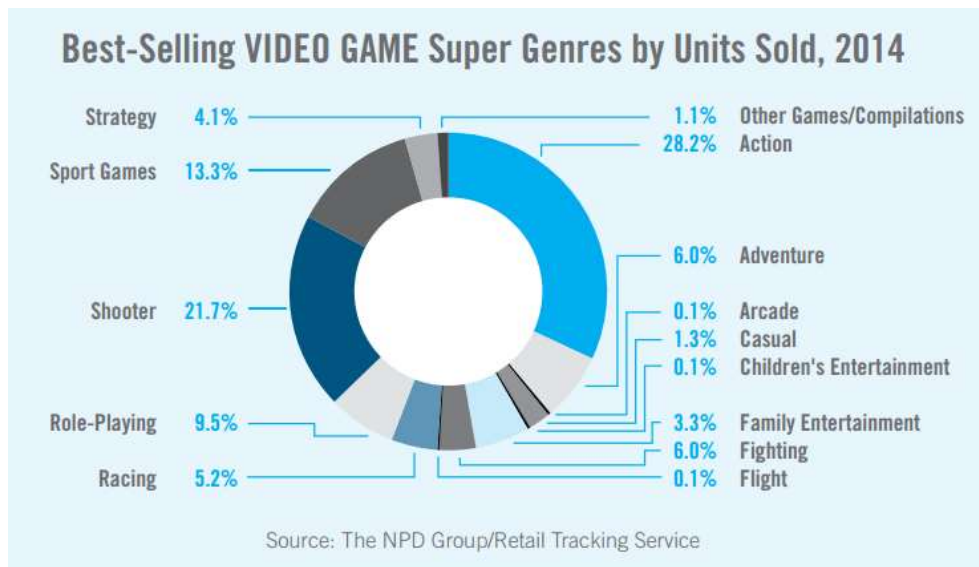


Figure 3-9: Share of video game genres on total game sales  
Source: (ESA, 2015)

Genres mix and are conditioned by platform (vis. Figure 3-10). Thus strategies and RPGs are far more popular on PC than on consoles, benefiting from mouse usage when dealing with multiple commands and cycling through many inventories and sub-screens.

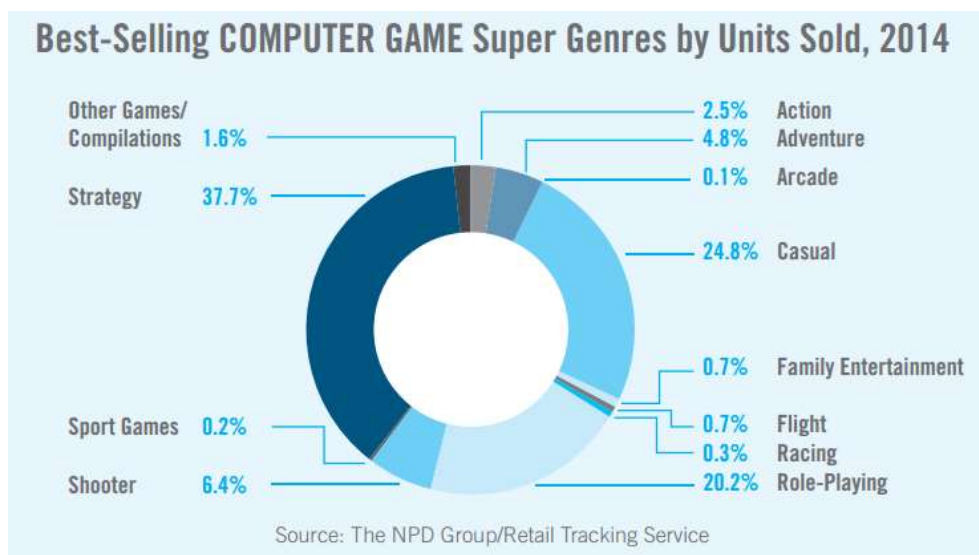


Figure 3-10: Share of video game genres on total, PC game sales  
Source: (ESA, 2015)

As for the **general devices**, most gamers use **PC** to play games (**62 %**), then video game console (**56 %**), **smartphone** (**35 %**), **wireless device** (**31 %**) and dedicated **handheld** system (**21 %**). The share of video game console brands, as of Q1 2016, plays in favour of **Sony's PlayStation 4** that owns **more than 50% of the total market share** and still grows as



it is shown in Figure 3-11. Phil Spencer, the CEO of Xbox, reported that **PS4 has at least 70% market share in all mainland European countries** and frequently greater than 90% in many. (Orland, 2015)

### REPORTED/ESTIMATED WORLDWIDE SHIPMENTS

Life-to-date through end of calendar quarter (millions)

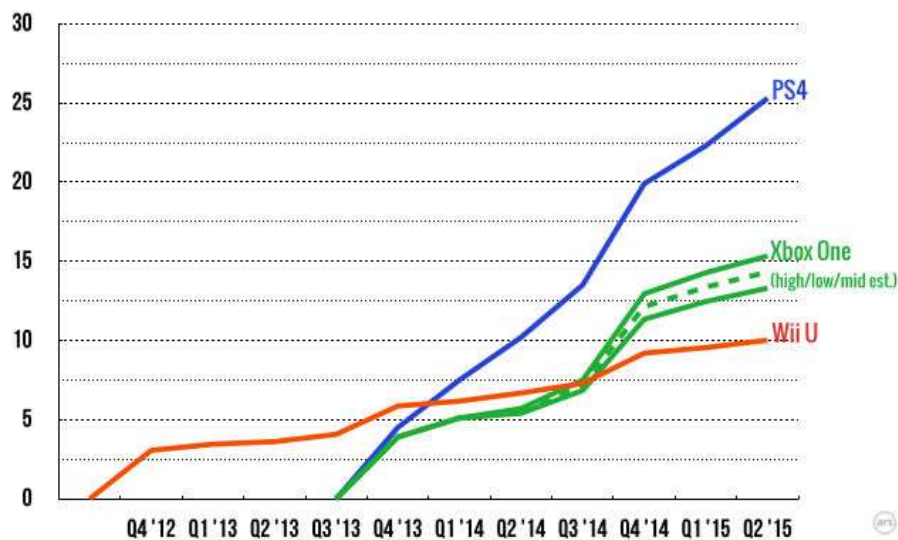


Figure 3-11: Worldwide shipments trend per console

Source: (Orland, 2015)

### REPORTED/ESTIMATED WORLDWIDE SHIPMENTS

Percentage of worldwide three-console market, life-to-date shipments by quarter

(percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding)

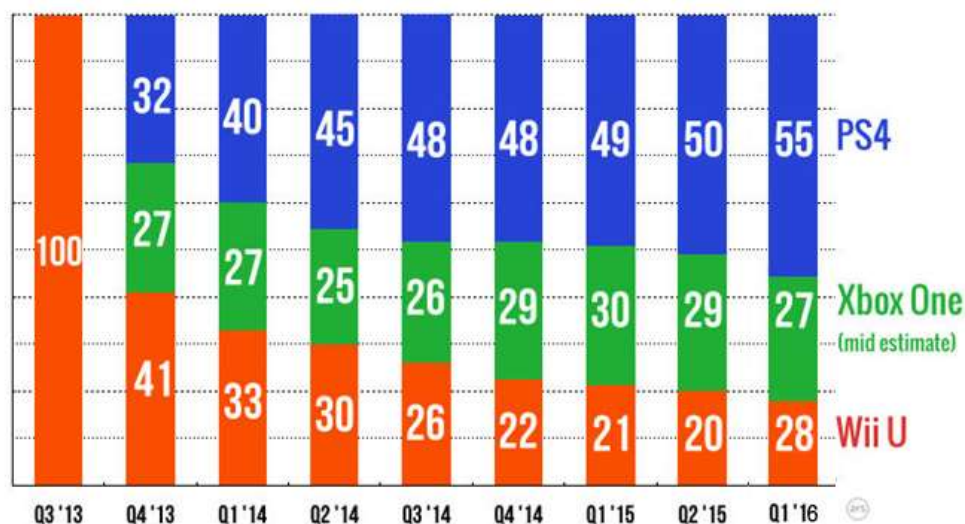
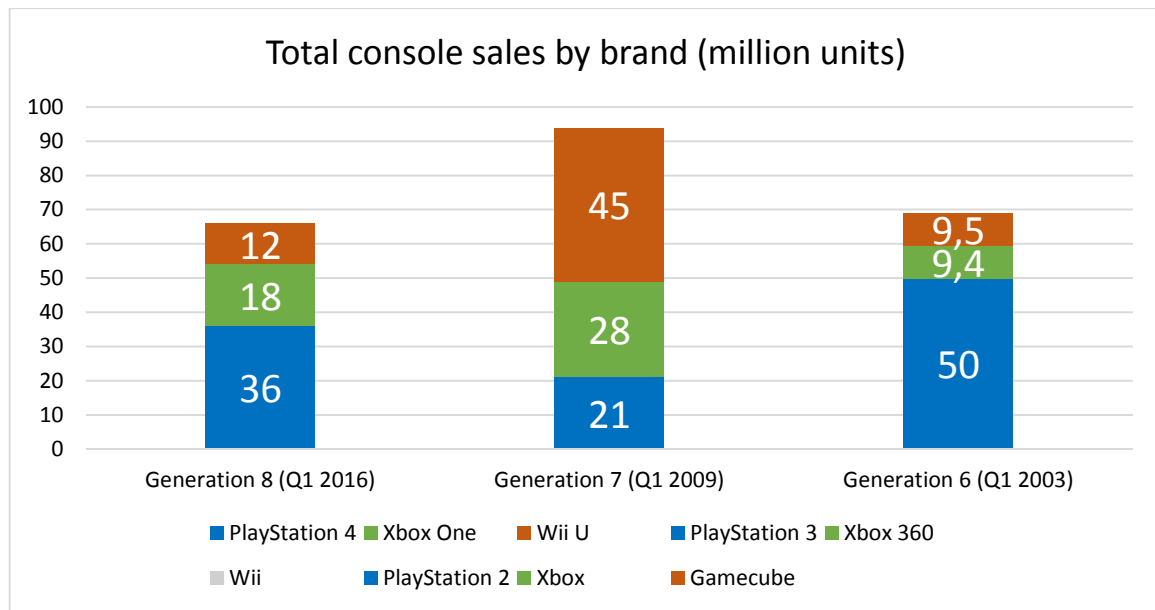


Figure 3-12: Console shares per brand

Source: Based on (Orland, 2015)

The actual sales of each console, as of Q1 2016 are as is demonstrated by Figure 3-12, leaving Sony with the major share. (Crossley, 2016) From the numbers alone, it can be deduced

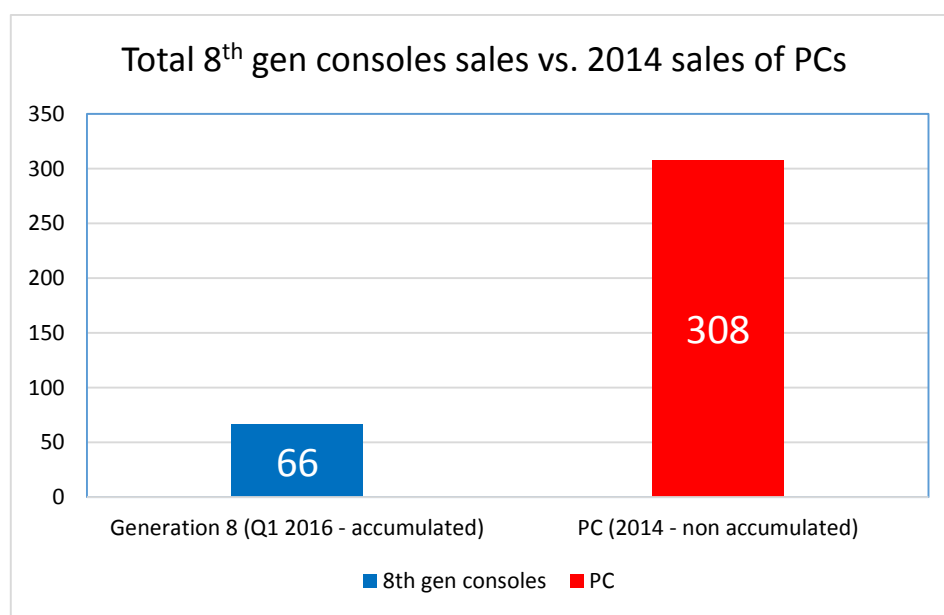
that sales of eight generation are below sales of generation seven as seen in Figure 3-13. The **seventh generation** had sold **94 million units** three years since its start compared to **66 million of generation eight**. Without the **anomaly of the mass market Wii** however, the sales are holding pretty much **one the same level as generation six**, which is **comprehensible**, since the **market still grows**.



**Figure 3-13: Total console sales by brand per generation**

*Source: Based on (Crossley, 2016; Gamezine, 2008; BBC, 2003; VGSales 1, 2016; VGSales 2, 2016)*

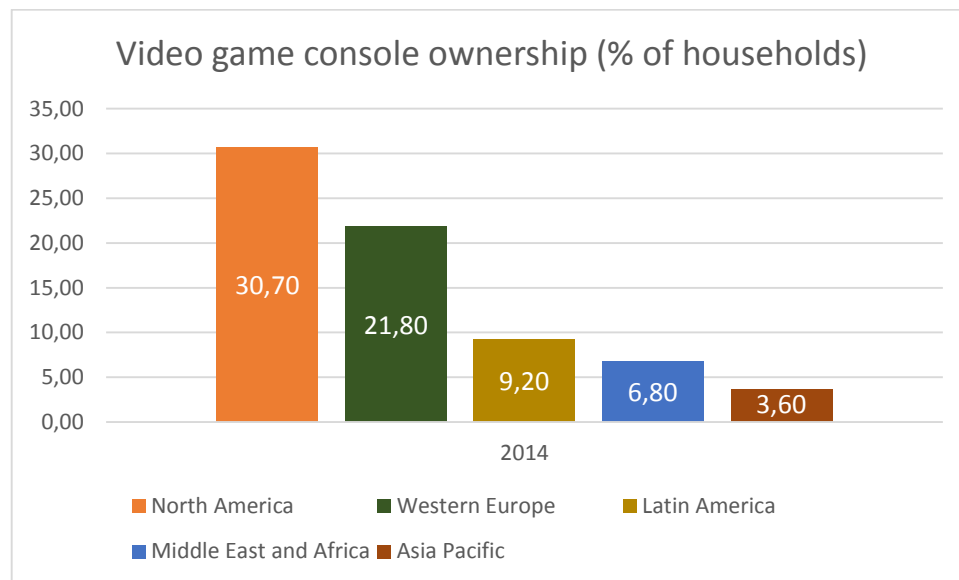
Meanwhile, **over 308 million PCs were sold in 2014 alone**, which spectacularly dwarfs the numbers of console sales as is shown in Figure 3-14. As the source article reads, PC gaming is truly making a comeback. (Statt, 2015)



**Figure 3-14: Total 8th generation video game console sales vs. 2014 sales of Personal Computers**

*Source: Based on (Crossley, 2016; Statt, 2015)*

Speculations about this console generation being the last may have financial underlining as the growth of the video game market is driven by **China** and **India**. Should these countries continue with their **support of PC market**, future **console releases** can be **endangered**. As you can see in Figure 3-15, about **3,6 % of household in Asia Pacific** own a console and **less than 2% in India and China** respectively.



**Figure 3-15: Video game console ownership per region**  
*Source: Based on (Euromonitor, 2015)*

The **market** is in a **favourable condition**; however, **problems** introduced in **seventh generation** have done **damage to the quality of products** as well as to the **economic viability of hardware development**. It is very **unlikely** that the **next generation will follow the exact same pattern** of the previous ones and serious **changes** can be expected. The markets have **blend** in such a manner that **consoles are designed as PCs** and some **PCs are designed to be consoles**. **Mobile gaming** has reached such a level that, with a proper battery and controller add-on, it **could serve as a gaming device, blending with handhelds** completely. **Gaming** has become so **mainstream** that the **target group** has become **blurred**. The **dawn of virtual reality** could make the **market even fuzzier** when it comes to targeting and the perception of how console gaming differs from PCs.

## 4 Relationships and Videogames

As for the social aspect of gaming, **56 % of gamers play with others**, 42 % with friends, 21 % with family members, 16 % with parents and mere 15 % with partner/spouse. They spend **6.5 hours per week playing with others online** and **5 hours** per week playing with others **in -person**. **29 %** of gamers pay to **play video games online**, such as MMOs and shooters, and 54 % of them give in to multiplayer mode at least once a week. To underline the social concept, 54 % of gamers feel that video games help them connect with friends and 45 % find them helpful when spending time with family. (ESA, 2015) A good example is the FGTeEV channel run by a whole family of gamers, as seen in Figure 4-1.



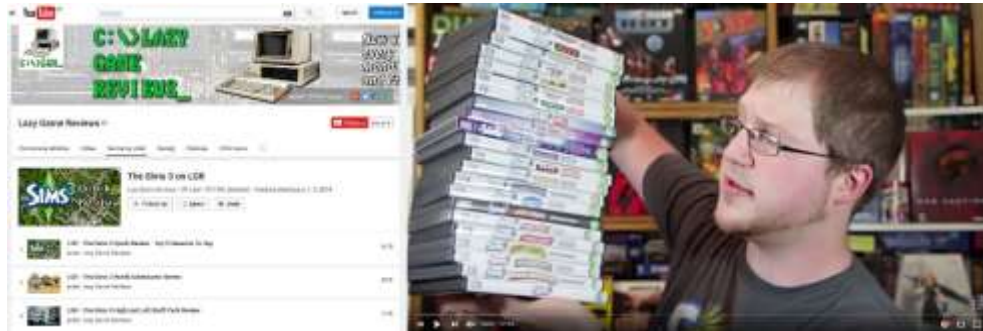
Figure 4-1: FGTeEV is a YouTube channel run by an entire family of six.  
*Source: (YouTube 6, 2016)*

### 4.1 E-sports and YouTube maven

YouTube channels like the FGTeEV channel are dedicated to **E-sports** that have become a favourite past-time for many and a paid job for some. Besides the obvious **entertainment purpose** of the posted gameplay footage and the accompanying commentary, these **social media channels** have more value for the audience. Gaming-focused YouTubers are in a role of **market mavens**. For example, **Clint Basinger**, the creator of **Lazy Game Reviews (LGR) channel**, reviews classic and new **PC titles**, old **hardware** and computer **accessories** in a very comprehensible and educated manner. This increases **product awareness** of **395 374 users subscribed to the channel** as of 2016. (YouTube, 2016) Clint **points out key PC titles** of the last decade, **recommends the best product alternatives** (if multiple versions of the product



were released) and **lists contemporary distribution channels** for their purchase. LGR is famous for his **The Sims reviews**. The legendary life simulator franchise has spawned 4 main titles since the year 2000, 28 expansion packs extending its functionality and 29 stuff packs bringing in new content. Clint reviewed every single release in **The Sims 3 product line** and **curated content for gamers who have just stumbled upon the franchise**, or were indecisive about which of the releases to add to their base game. He can be seen in Figure 4-2, holding the whole stack of available The Sims 3 products.



**Figure 4-2: Clint Basinger, aka. the Lazy Gamer Reviews, professionally curates gaming content to many.**  
*Source: Based on (YouTube 7, 2016)*

Similarly to LGR, **YouTuber Metal Jesus Rocks** focuses on gaming, but more from the console perspective. Metal Jesus is a **video game collector**, he collects gaming software and hardware, whether it be actual games, home consoles, portable systems or accessories. His “hidden gems” and “buying guide” videos are aimed at **purchase recommendations inside each video game system’s product line and software library**. Gamers can play the buying guide video for Sony’s PlayStation Portable console and decide whichever of the four available models to purchase, based on their hardware and software capabilities curated by Metal Jesus, who also recommends the **“must play” games and hidden gems**. This had actually motivated some of the **279 180 subscribers** to go and purchase these “hidden gems” online, which has **increased the demand and price for these products on eBay** as a consequence. This has happened multiple times and was reacted to in the comments section of videos and even by Metal Jesus himself.



Figure 4-3: YouTuber Metal Jesus Rocks curates console hardware and software, affecting demand for games that are considered to be rare.

Source: Based on (YouTube 8, 2016)

Both mavens **produce value for the curated brand, free of charge, from love of their hobby**. In this manner, both of these gaming YouTubers are part of the **video game subculture of consumption**. Gaming is their love & passion and affects their lifestyle on personal and professional level alike. As experienced in posted videos, gamers boost considerable **collection of games, hardware and merchandise** that **decorate their homes** (LGR often shoots his videos in front of a shelf loaded with game boxes), **wear gaming related clothes** (Metal Jesus' friend Kinsey is depicted in Figure 4-3 wearing a Bowser inspired dress, i.e. a dress made in style of one of Nintendo's iconic characters), **attend video game events** (Metal Jesus uploaded the „Portland Retro Expo“ video among many event related content and LGR posted the „HTC Vive at PAX Prime 2015“ video where he attended the gaming event and shared his views on the virtual reality machine), **network with other gamers** (LGR shoots collaboration videos with his fellow gamer PushingUpRoses and Metal Jesus networked with Kinsey, Reggie and Kelsey, who happen to be employees at local video game stores), are **employed in the video game market** (Metal Jesus worked for Sierra Entertainment, a famous game developer), **share tips about the hobby concerned** („Gamer eats“ food-focused episodes from Metal Jesus Rocks or the „Viva Mesh Office Chair“ and „Razer Deathstalker Keyboard“ reviews from LGR), and **spend a considerable ammount of their income on this hobby**.



Figure 4-4: PewDiePie is a YouTube channel with the most subscribers to date. Felix Kjellberg, the channel's creator, endorses video games and a game distribution channel G2A.

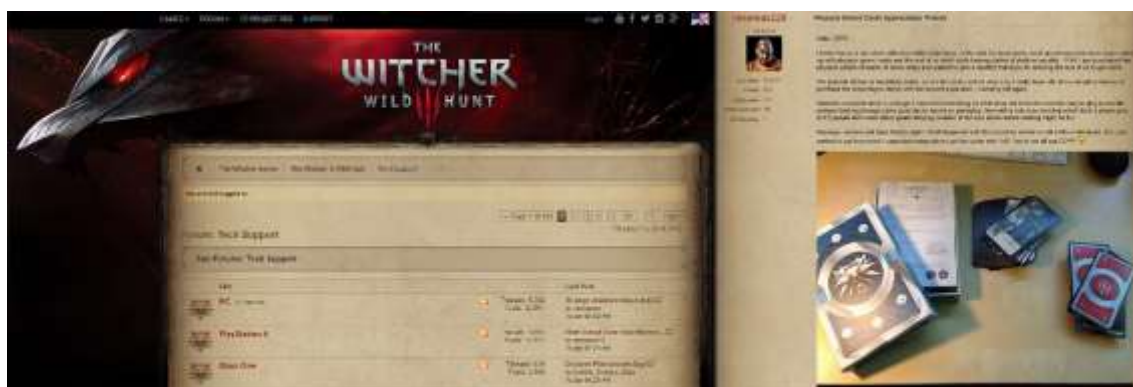
The **quality** of such content is **on a representative level**, which doesn't go unnoticed by market's subjects. **PewDiePie**, the **most prominent gaming YouTuber** and the **most subscribed channel on YouTube in general** (46,902,715 subscribers as of 2016), was **contacted by** a third party video **game distributor G2A to promote their service**, as seen in Figure 4-4. Similarly to Felix, Clint from the **LGR** channel has been **sent free copies** of the two latest **The Sims 4 titles** to write a review for them, and **Adam Koralik**, a YouTuber interested mainly in market's evolution, was **invited to a promotional event** for Ubisoft's Rainbow Six Siege to test the game's multiplayer mode.

The **connectivity of communal and commercial** is apparent here and ranges from **random facilitation** from developers and publishers to **long-lasting business partnerships**. In case of Adam Koralik and LGR, the relationship is loose and **uncovered** in real-time for the **loyal audience, who benefit** from such deal in a form of **new content**. Even the business deal between PewDiePie could be seen as beneficial for gamers, as Felix endorses a service that supplies games at fragment of their retail price. Once **untold** or partially **hidden**, these communal-to-commercial deals can be **problematic** and can cause an **uproar**. An example can be found with Ubisoft's Shadow of Mordor title that was promoted via **paid YouTube reviews**. Since no YouTube regulation existed until 2015, paid endorsements did not have to be noted as such. Namely PewDiePie became a target of criticism, although he included the „...sponsored by Warner Brothers“ line in the video description. The deal generated **5.5 million views of positive reviews** and is currently under the investigation of the US Federal Trade Commission for deceiving customers. (Eurogamer, 2016) In conclusion, **relations of communal and commercial** spheres can **cause damage if not disclosed** to the gullible audience, but can be a great way of **generating free promotion in case of gifts and event invitations**.

## 4.2 Social media as a platform for socialization and RM

**Mavenism** is not tied solely to YouTube, but to **other platforms** affiliated with gaming. This includes game oriented **forums**, **web** pages, **blogs**, **Facebook** and **Twitter** groups, **Wikis**, and official **distribution platforms**. As for forums, CD Projekt Red's forum dedicated to their Witcher franchise supplies gamers with gaming tips & walkthroughs and serves as a platform of support. Looking at the forum from the social network analysis perspective, it represents both **tight social network** and the **customer support model**. Members discuss the product and issues they have experienced with it, but also comment on video games in general, which opens space for moral issues such as the dilemma of game copy protections. This is no longer done on

a **technical** tone, but on a tone of **values** and **beliefs**. As such, the forum platform provides a space for classic product support, for daily consocialization and in-depth socialization. In a RM sense, the **Witcher forum** is a **brand community**, circulating around the **popular gaming franchise** and analysing it from every angle possible. Screenshot of the forum can be seen in Figure 4-5 which also depicts mavenism of one members who reviewed merchandise (playing cards) packed with a copy of Witcher III.



**Figure 4-5: The Witcher forum serves as a platform for customer support and as a home for the Witcher brand community that indulges in (con)socialization, support and mavenism alike.**

*Source: Based on (CDPROJEKTRED, 2015)*

Although forums can serve as a **repository for knowledge** with individual threads that are kept up to date and are permanently on top of the discussions list, it is Wikis that are made directly with this function in mind. There are **thousands of game focused Wikis** (as a platform derived from Wikipedia, the biggest online encyclopedia) that feature **in-depth brand lore**. This includes major **overview of the product catalogue** (list of games in the franchise across many platforms), **release description** for each game (release date, developer, publisher, compatible platforms, system requirements, launch price etc.), **thorough narration of the story** and **characters** and its place in the franchise's continuum, **information of technical character** (such as list of known issues, aka. bugs, patches that removed them, including their changelog, and list of available modifications, as seen in Figure 4-6), and also game's **cultural impact** (awards; TV, music, game, book appearances; celebrities tied to the release etc.). What is specific for Wikis is that they are part of the **communal** sphere and are **created** chaotically **on the basis of voluntary contribution**. Anyone can co-create the content, which makes the material less reliable in eyes of academics, but an absolute saving grace for gamers. Not to mention that Wikis have evolved greatly and **feature links to sources**. Given the character of the network and its **low social interactivity**, Wikis present the **ethereal consumer tribes** that form in the **audience network model**, and are centred around content **co-created by**



anonymous **gaming enthusiasts** that dissappear as fast as their interest for the game or the gaming activity.

**Super Mario Sunshine**

Mario makes his debut on the Nintendo GameCube with **Super Mario Sunshine**. On a vacation away from the Mushroom Kingdom, Mario finds himself in a messy situation on the island of Delfino, where a Mario look-alike has been causing all kinds of trouble. Explore huge 3D environments that range from a lush tropical paradise, to an exciting amusement park complete with a roller coaster you can ride. Mario makes use of a new water park, which allows him to hover, launch, and rocket around levels, as well as spray enemies with water. But never had so many tasks and enemies, so be careful not to get in too much trouble.

**Problems**

- 1.1 Graphics Behaves Oddly
- 1.2 Many Flips
- 1.3 AA Codes Cause Crash
- 1.4 Tearing Video Improperly
- 1.5 Delay Crash

**2. Issues**

- 2.1 Anisotropic Filtering
- 2.2 16:9 Aspect Ratio Fix
- 2.3 FPS

**3. Configuration**

- 3.1 Settings

**4. Version Compatibility**

**5. Testing**

**6. Gameplay Issues**

**7. Gameplay Video**

**Problems**

**Graphics Behaves Oddly**

- Anisotropic Filtering above 16x or Anti-Aliasing to 8x causes the game to crash. Additionally, 16x/8x is broken on certain systems.
- The game may crash on some systems and users should if Force Texture Filtering is disabled.

**Configuration**

Only configuration options for the best compatibility where they deviate from defaults are listed. A full list of options is available in the Config Menus for the configuration.

Category	Setting	Notes
Anti-Aliasing	Non-SMAA	Avoid improper game behavior
Anisotropic Filtering	16x	Render water properly, avoid DirectX 9.0c improper game behavior
Scaled FPS Copy	ON	Avoid blurry game edges
Force Texture Filtering	ON	Avoid improper game behavior
High FPS Access from CPU	ON	Task appropriately
Store FPS Capable to Texture Only	ON	Avoid improper game behavior

**Version Compatibility**

The graph below charts the compatibility with Super Mario Sunshine across Dolphin's 1.0.0 release, listing operations only where a compatibility change occurred.

Version	Compatibility
1.0.0	100%
1.0.1	100%
1.0.2	100%
1.0.3	100%
1.0.4	100%
1.0.5	100%
1.0.6	100%
1.0.7	100%
1.0.8	100%
1.0.9	100%
1.1.0	100%
1.1.1	100%
1.1.2	100%
1.1.3	100%
1.1.4	100%
1.1.5	100%
1.1.6	100%
1.1.7	100%
1.1.8	100%
1.1.9	100%
1.2.0	100%
1.2.1	100%
1.2.2	100%
1.2.3	100%
1.2.4	100%
1.2.5	100%
1.2.6	100%
1.2.7	100%
1.2.8	100%
1.2.9	100%
1.3.0	100%
1.3.1	100%
1.3.2	100%
1.3.3	100%
1.3.4	100%
1.3.5	100%
1.3.6	100%
1.3.7	100%
1.3.8	100%
1.3.9	100%
1.4.0	100%
1.4.1	100%
1.4.2	100%
1.4.3	100%
1.4.4	100%
1.4.5	100%
1.4.6	100%
1.4.7	100%
1.4.8	100%
1.4.9	100%
1.5.0	100%
1.5.1	100%
1.5.2	100%
1.5.3	100%
1.5.4	100%
1.5.5	100%
1.5.6	100%
1.5.7	100%
1.5.8	100%
1.5.9	100%
1.6.0	100%
1.6.1	100%
1.6.2	100%
1.6.3	100%
1.6.4	100%
1.6.5	100%
1.6.6	100%
1.6.7	100%
1.6.8	100%
1.6.9	100%
1.7.0	100%
1.7.1	100%
1.7.2	100%
1.7.3	100%
1.7.4	100%
1.7.5	100%
1.7.6	100%
1.7.7	100%
1.7.8	100%
1.7.9	100%
1.8.0	100%
1.8.1	100%
1.8.2	100%
1.8.3	100%
1.8.4	100%
1.8.5	100%
1.8.6	100%
1.8.7	100%
1.8.8	100%
1.8.9	100%
1.9.0	100%
1.9.1	100%
1.9.2	100%
1.9.3	100%
1.9.4	100%
1.9.5	100%
1.9.6	100%
1.9.7	100%
1.9.8	100%
1.9.9	100%
2.0.0	100%
2.0.1	100%
2.0.2	100%
2.0.3	100%
2.0.4	100%
2.0.5	100%
2.0.6	100%
2.0.7	100%
2.0.8	100%
2.0.9	100%
2.1.0	100%
2.1.1	100%
2.1.2	100%
2.1.3	100%
2.1.4	100%
2.1.5	100%
2.1.6	100%
2.1.7	100%
2.1.8	100%
2.1.9	100%
2.2.0	100%
2.2.1	100%
2.2.2	100%
2.2.3	100%
2.2.4	100%
2.2.5	100%
2.2.6	100%
2.2.7	100%
2.2.8	100%
2.2.9	100%
2.3.0	100%
2.3.1	100%
2.3.2	100%
2.3.3	100%
2.3.4	100%
2.3.5	100%
2.3.6	100%
2.3.7	100%
2.3.8	100%
2.3.9	100%
2.4.0	100%
2.4.1	100%
2.4.2	100%
2.4.3	100%
2.4.4	100%
2.4.5	100%
2.4.6	100%
2.4.7	100%
2.4.8	100%
2.4.9	100%
2.5.0	100%
2.5.1	100%
2.5.2	100%
2.5.3	100%
2.5.4	100%
2.5.5	100%
2.5.6	100%
2.5.7	100%
2.5.8	100%
2.5.9	100%
2.6.0	100%
2.6.1	100%
2.6.2	100%
2.6.3	100%
2.6.4	100%
2.6.5	100%
2.6.6	100%
2.6.7	100%
2.6.8	100%
2.6.9	100%
2.7.0	100%
2.7.1	100%
2.7.2	100%
2.7.3	100%
2.7.4	100%
2.7.5	100%
2.7.6	100%
2.7.7	100%
2.7.8	100%
2.7.9	100%
2.8.0	100%
2.8.1	100%
2.8.2	100%
2.8.3	100%
2.8.4	100%
2.8.5	100%
2.8.6	100%
2.8.7	100%
2.8.8	100%
2.8.9	100%
2.9.0	100%
2.9.1	100%
2.9.2	100%
2.9.3	100%
2.9.4	100%
2.9.5	100%
2.9.6	100%
2.9.7	100%
2.9.8	100%
2.9.9	100%
3.0.0	100%
3.0.1	100%
3.0.2	100%
3.0.3	100%
3.0.4	100%
3.0.5	100%
3.0.6	100%
3.0.7	100%
3.0.8	100%
3.0.9	100%
3.1.0	100%
3.1.1	100%
3.1.2	100%
3.1.3	100%
3.1.4	100%
3.1.5	100%
3.1.6	100%
3.1.7	100%
3.1.8	100%
3.1.9	100%
3.2.0	100%
3.2.1	100%
3.2.2	100%
3.2.3	100%
3.2.4	100%
3.2.5	100%
3.2.6	100%
3.2.7	100%
3.2.8	100%
3.2.9	100%
3.3.0	100%
3.3.1	100%
3.3.2	100%
3.3.3	100%
3.3.4	100%
3.3.5	100%
3.3.6	100%
3.3.7	100%
3.3.8	100%
3.3.9	100%
3.4.0	100%
3.4.1	100%
3.4.2	100%
3.4.3	100%
3.4.4	100%
3.4.5	100%
3.4.6	100%
3.4.7	100%
3.4.8	100%
3.4.9	100%
3.5.0	100%
3.5.1	100%
3.5.2	100%
3.5.3	100%
3.5.4	100%
3.5.5	100%
3.5.6	100%
3.5.7	100%
3.5.8	100%
3.5.9	100%
3.6.0	100%
3.6.1	100%
3.6.2	100%
3.6.3	100%
3.6.4	100%
3.6.5	100%
3.6.6	100%
3.6.7	100%
3.6.8	100%
3.6.9	100%
3.7.0	100%
3.7.1	100%
3.7.2	100%
3.7.3	100%
3.7.4	100%
3.7.5	100%
3.7.6	100%
3.7.7	100%
3.7.8	100%
3.7.9	100%
3.8.0	100%
3.8.1	100%
3.8.2	100%
3.8.3	100%
3.8.4	100%
3.8.5	100%
3.8.6	100%
3.8.7	100%
3.8.8	100%
3.8.9	100%
3.9.0	100%
3.9.1	100%
3.9.2	100%
3.9.3	100%
3.9.4	100%
3.9.5	100%
3.9.6	100%
3.9.7	100%
3.9.8	100%
3.9.9	100%
4.0.0	100%
4.0.1	100%
4.0.2	100%
4.0.3	100%
4.0.4	100%
4.0.5	100%
4.0.6	100%
4.0.7	100%
4.0.8	100%
4.0.9	100%
4.1.0	100%
4.1.1	100%
4.1.2	100%
4.1.3	100%
4.1.4	100%
4.1.5	100%
4.1.6	100%
4.1.7	100%
4.1.8	100%
4.1.9	100%
4.2.0	100%
4.2.1	100%
4.2.2	100%
4.2.3	100%
4.2.4	100%
4.2.5	100%
4.2.6	100%
4.2.7	100%
4.2.8	100%
4.2.9	100%
4.3.0	100%
4.3.1	100%
4.3.2	100%
4.3.3	100%
4.3.4	100%
4.3.5	100%
4.3.6	100%
4.3.7	100%
4.3.8	100%
4.3.9	100%
4.4.0	100%
4.4.1	100%
4.4.2	100%
4.4.3	100%
4.4.4	100%
4.4.5	100%
4.4.6	100%
4.4.7	100%
4.4.8	100%
4.4.9	100%
4.5.0	100%
4.5.1	100%
4.5.2	100%
4.5.3	100%
4.5.4	100%
4.5.5	100%
4.5.6	100%
4.5.7	100%
4.5.8	100%
4.5.9	100%
4.6.0	100%
4.6.1	100%
4.6.2	100%
4.6.3	100%
4.6.4	100%
4.6.5	100%
4.6.6	100%
4.6.7	100%
4.6.8	100%
4.6.9	100%
4.7.0	100%
4.7.1	100%
4.7.2	100%
4.7.3	100%
4.7.4	100%
4.7.5	100%
4.7.6	100%
4.7.7	100%
4.7.8	100%
4.7.9	100%
4.8.0	100%
4.8.1	100%
4.8.2	100%
4.8.3	100%
4.8.4	100%
4.8.5	100%
4.8.6	100%
4.8.7	100%
4.8.8	100%
4.8.9	100%
4.9.0	100%
4.9.1	100%
4.9.2	100%
4.9.3	100%
4.9.4	100%
4.9.5	100%
4.9.6	100%
4.9.7	100%
4.9.8	100%
4.9.9	100%
5.0.0	100%
5.0.1	100%
5.0.2	100%
5.0.3	100%
5.0.4	100%
5.0.5	100%
5.0.6	100%
5.0.7	100%
5.0.8	100%
5.0.9	100%
5.1.0	100%
5.1.1	100%
5.1.2	100%
5.1.3	100%
5.1.4	100%
5.1.5	100%
5.1.6	100%
5.1.7	100%
5.1.8	100%
5.1.9	100%
5.2.0	100%

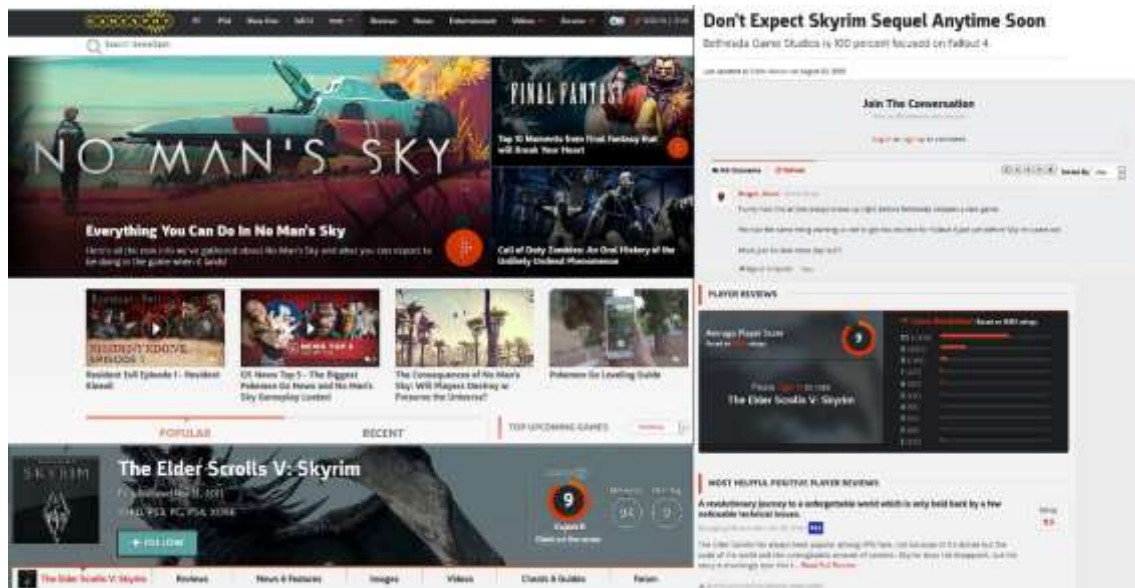


Figure 4-7: Gamespot's website includes gaming news and reviews. In the picture is a page dedicated to *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* a legendary role playing game by Bethesda. The micro page includes news related to *Skyrim*, images, videos, discussion, Gamespot's review score, but also a metacritic score across many gaming media and even reviews from 18,492 Gamespot members who reviewed the game.

*Source: Based on (Gamespot, 2016)*

A connectivity with **YouTuber culture** can be seen at Gamespot that has its own series of entertainment shows like „The Lobby“ for live moderator discussions, or „The Gist“ for short gaming top lists, as seen in Figure 4-8. Gaming webs also seem to have **fused with movie and comics industry** and use the cultural synchronisation process to do so. There are games based on movies and movies based on games and so the final output is very consistent, although of different form. Comic book heroes are natives of both worlds.



Figure 4-8: Even news journalists on Gamespot had adapted vlogging that's so typical for YouTube"

*Source: Based on(Gamespot, 2016)*

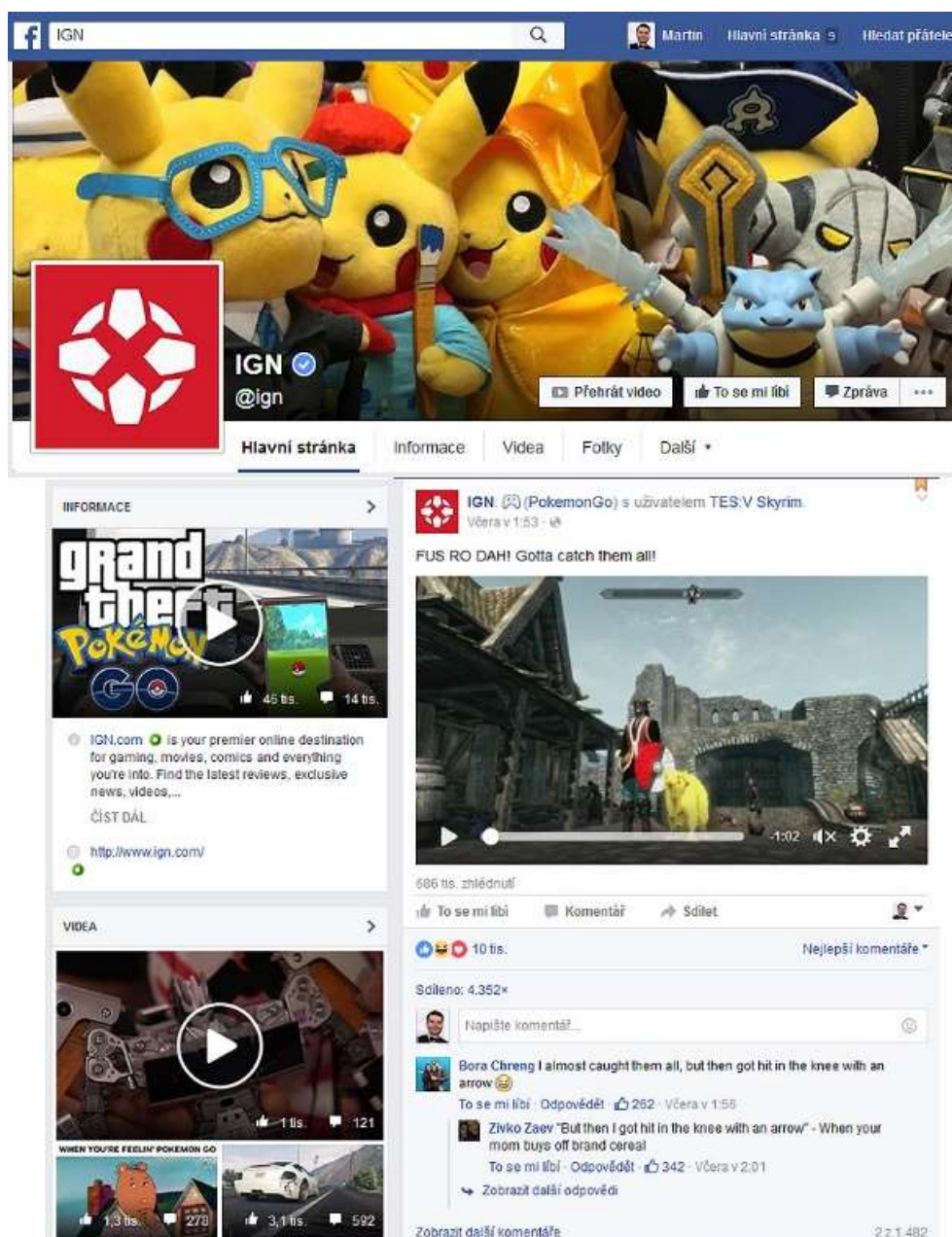


Figure 4-9: Facebook account of a gaming journalist IGN, filled with memes and short videos that are somewhat connected to video games. On the picture is also a post featuring remix of games *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *Pokémon GO*, to which one of the viewers responds with a mixture of two memes. One from *Pokémon*: „Gotta catch them all,“ and one from *Skyrim*: „I was an adventurer like you, until I took an arrow to the knee.“

Gaming webs have social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter tied to them. In comparison to the former, the level of socialization is rather shallow, given the character of the medium and a **wider target audience**. The posts have more entertaining character and are **less specialised and serious**, which makes them easier to share among the non-gamer audience, as seen in Figure 4-9. YouTube **videos**, short **Vine** clips, animated **GIFs** or static **Memes** help to **send the message across more easily** and allow gamers to **consocialize** on daily basis. This **remix culture**, as seen in Figure 4-9, is typical for **consumption tribes**, but the hobby of gaming would create a subculture of consumption as previously stated. The network here is



the **topical cluster network**, based on short discussions to isolated posts, but the medium also represents the **customer support model** for individual developers or publishers, because gamers can report **issues** with the **product** or its **distribution**.

### 4.3 Distribution platforms as the ultimate relationship space

Lastly, a major network that encapsulates the **audience network model**, **customer support model** and **topical cluster network** at the same time is the complex **Steam platform**. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Steam is the **biggest distribution channel for digital gaming**. Not only that, Steam **reaches to retail distribution**, as even some physical titles require online activation, and is currently a **major player in virtual reality**. Its ties to Valve, a well renowned game & hardware developer, create a **seamless vertical synchronisation** when it comes to its own titles. Valve develops a game, sells it and supports it through Steam, as is shown in Figure 4-10. This logistic chain includes **movement of information**, **products** and **money**, including the **pre and post purchase services** and even the backflow of **reclamations** and **returns**. The product is distributed in its native form, as a digital code.

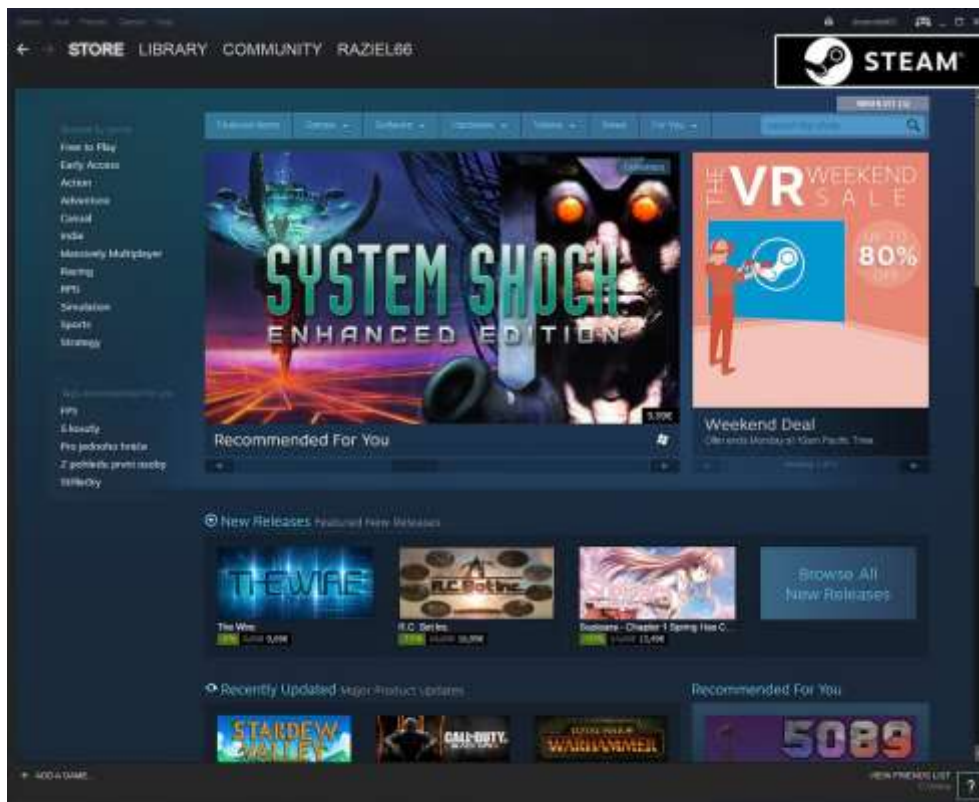


Figure 4-10: Steam, Valve's multifunctional platform for PC gaming  
Source: (ValveCorporation, 2016)

The service is very convenient. Users download a desktop application, create an account, log in, **browse through the catalogue** of games, **purchase**, **pay** and **play**, all in one



ecosystem of Steam. Due to **periodic sales**, games can be purchased at **considerably lower prices** and are **delivered** as **quickly** as user's internet connection allows them to be. All games are kept up to date **automatically** and any released **patches** are downloaded and **applied** upon turning the client on. The flow of data is two-way and player's **saved games** get **backed up on Valve's servers** (majority of new titles have this „Steam cloud“ function). This allows players to **migrate between computers** without losing their saved data. The platform also connects the **achievement system** with user's gameplay, giving players a **list of goals** to achieve within the game and **rewarding** them with **badges** and **points**. It is a system that was introduced with Microsoft's Xbox console and Xbox Live gaming network and perfected with the release of Xbox 360. GOG and Steam on PC, PlayStation Network for PS3 and PS4 and Xbox Live for Xbox 360 and Xbox One, all include the mechanic of achievements. From RM perspective, achievements serve both **intrinsic** and **extrinsic value**. To get an achievement means to **beat an in-game challenge**, which results in a pleasant feeling of **inner satisfaction**. The presence of these badges and **cumulative points on user's public account**, stands for **projecting one's devotion** for gaming and **gamer status**. Xbox Live User Stallion83 holds a Guinness world record for achieving 1,000,000 gamer score on Xbox Live and his public profile carries this information proudly, as seen in Figure 4-11.



Figure 4-11: Xbox Live Gamertag with cumulative gamerscore. On the right is an excerpt from achievements list for Batman: Arkham Asylum. The list is identical to achievements found on Steam.

Source: Based on (Xboxgamertag, 2015; Xboxachievements, 2014)

Steam's **downsides** would be the presence of extra **DRM measures** for certain games, such as the necessity to install Ubisoft's Uplay client in addition to steam; **bad conversions** of certain games (missing content, compatibility issues); the „always on“ rule that renders the games unusable once internet connection is lost; and **fluid principles of ownership**. Although games are tied to customer's account, they can be **taken down from the store at any time**,

which not only prevents them from being purchased, but can even result in them being **taken down from user's game library!** In 2015, **Ubisoft disabled digital copies** of Far Cry 4 and Assassin's Creed: Unity that were purchased through **3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors**, such as G2A, which resulted in the games disappearing from users' Steam library. Although Ubisoft argueded with "*game keys that were fraudulently obtained and resold*," many gamers, including Author, took it as a way how to discredit the, much much cheaper, 3<sup>rd</sup> party distributors. The case caused an uproar and Ubisoft had to re-enable the copies again, resulting in yet another callback concerning its digital presence. **Ubisoft, EA and now Microsoft want to take a bigger bite from the digital sales pie and push forward their own platforms (Uplay, Origin and Windows store respectively)**, as seen in Figure 4-12. Games like Microsoft's Quantum Break, Ubisoft's Dragon Age: Inquisition or EA's Mass Effect 3 are nowhere to be found on Steam. But the **inflated prices; badly designed** clients, infused with **invasive DRM and security holes; absence of customer feedback** and discussions; **unstable server** connections; and **buggy titles** prevent them to do so. (Yin-Poole, 2015; Klepek, 2014)



**Figure 4-12: Five major players in the digital distribution of PC games**

Meanwhile, **CD Projekt Red's** platform **GOG** (Good Old Games) **operates excellently**, offers **plethora of oldschool** and contemporary **titles at low prices**, has a **well designed store** and boosts an **optional client**. Just like Steam, GOG offers a **forum** platform to receive **feedback, to support** and ask for **suggestions**. **Reviews** for individual titles are written by customers and facilitate purchase. The GOG Galaxy **client is lightweight**, has **no DRM** measures and allows for seamless browse-purchase-play experience. The reputation of CD Projekt Red, as a company that was formed by gamers for gamers, helps the company to distinguish itself from the rest. The high quality of its titles, the DRM free policy and the free-of-charge downloadable content support these claims with actions.

**Customer feedback** in a form of reviews seems to be **essential** when it comes to digital distribution. **Gamers** are **more savvy** and seek for information to justify their purchase. When the **vast ammount of available games** and the **\$60 pricetag for new titles** is considered, gamers have to **choose wisely** when sacrificing their free time and money. Each title on **GOG** and **Steam** has many **reviews** that analyse the game from nearly every perspective. The summary of user reviews end up in a **collective grade for the title**. **Some reviews** are either **marked as helpful** and **pushed upwards** in the reviews list, **or** are **curated by selected individuals** and given a priority position. Either way, **to lie about the quality is impossible**. For example, Activision promoted the 2016 PC port of Marvel Ultimate Alliance 1 and 2 with these statements: *"We wanted these re-releases to be as faithful to the original Ultimate Alliance games as possible--the definitive versions. However, the team did work really hard on improving performance, some UI and graphic enhancements, as well as making the games compatible with modern platform features on PS4, Xbox One, and PC. They play really smooth."* (Pereira, 2016) From the description alone, players can learn that both releases are the „definitive versions,“ that they boost „improved performance“ and „graphic enhancements,“ and „play really smooth.“ Lies... As is demonstrated with Figure 4-13, 60 reviews on Steam were „mostly negative“ and revealed that the game does not feature all the release content, thus is not definitive, performs worse than the original while looking the same, and has serious issues due to messed up controls and crackling audio. In combination with the crazy \$40 price for each (for games that are 10 and 7 years old), the bottom line was **„a shameless cash grab“**. This is reflected in both Gamespot’s news article concerning the release and within Steam user reviews. Author wanted to buy both games, but due to reviews, he rejected the purchase. The **power of collective gatekeeping is strong** on the video game market and **forced Zoë Mode, the developer, to patch the game as soon as possible**. The question is whether it would have been fixed if users had not complained so much. Due to the new **reclamation policy**, users can now get their money back. Anybody who had issues and have played the game for less than two hours, is eligible for a **refund**. This proved to be the right instrument against the broken PC releases of the last, eight generation of gaming.

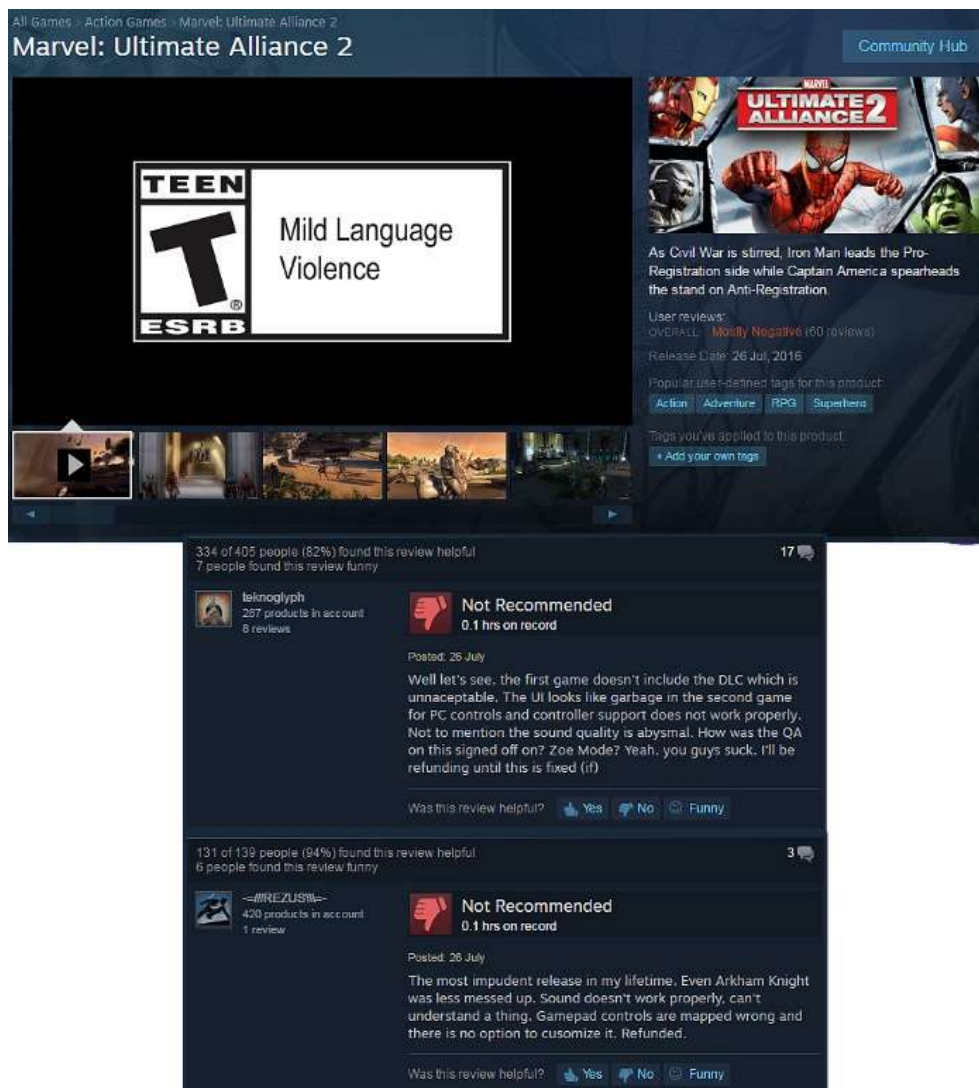


Figure 4-13: Steam store page reviews for Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 reveal the game is riddled with issues & shortcomings, although being advertised as „definitive“ and „smooth.“  
Source: (Valve Corporation, 2016)

Information dedicated to a single release do not end here and each item is paired with many sub-sections that can be accessed through the client. **Discussion** section serves as a **technical support**, an **archive for performance** and **gameplay tips & tricks**, and for **story related discourse**. **Guides** section is focused on tips **how to use the product**, how to **fix its shortcomings** and how to **extend its functionality**. **Screenshots**, **Artwork** and **Videos** sections then include **user generated content**, which opens space to **creativity** and **remix culture**, and **news** section allows **developers** to **communicate** information about upcoming content and patches.

**Steam is a relationship platform** indeed, a bridge between developers and gamers and among gamers themselves. It stands for **value co-creation** and shows characteristics of all three communities: **remix culture** and **community economics of consumer tribes**; **specialization, innovation** and **product mastery of subcultures of consumption**; and **brand related fandom, mainstream & commercial** appeal and **support of brand communities**. Various sections of the complex platform serve different socialization purposes, to curate information (**audience network model**), to discuss a theme (**topical cluster model**), and to provide customer support (**customer support model**).

#### 4.4 The co-creation process on the video gaming market

What needs to be highlighted from the RM perspective is **Steam Workshop**. It serves as a **co-creation platform** that is used to **distribute** and **review content created by fans**. This includes **original, in-game content**; **remixed content** that has been inspired by other, existing cultural artefacts; **game fixes**, aka. patches, that **remove inconsistencies** in the original product; and **mods** that **extend the title's functionality**.

Taking The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim as an example, the „Warchief armor“ is an original, equipable set of clothes for player's in-game character; the „Dark Wraith – Armor – Weapon“ does the same while adding a usable weapon, but being based on another video game Dark Souls; the „Unofficial Skyrim patch“ removes some of the graphical errors in 3D models and textures; and the „SkyUI“ mod completely revamps player's inventory, adding features such as item filtering and icons, and allowing the game's humongous map to be searched for locations in style of Google maps, as seen in Figure 4-14.

The **product** is **expanded** with original content, **remixed** with past, brand related content and content of cultural significance, **fixed**, and **improved**. All **free of charge**, from love for the brand. As of July 2016, there were 27,810 items available on the Skyrim's Steam workshop page, as a result of Bethesda Softwork's (the developer's) active endorsement of modding and implementation of co-creation tools. (ValveCorporation, 2016)





Figure 4-14: Bethesda Softworks, the developer of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, provided players with co-creation tools, which resulted in a massive modding scene with 27,810 items to choose from in Steam workshop.

*Source: Based on (ValveCorporation, 2016)*

Another legendary franchise that has sold millions worldwide is **The Sims**. The Sims is a **video game that stands for and equates with the process of co-creation**, The Sims is a one, big platform for gamers' **creativity**. As a **life simulator**, players can **model their virtual character**, Sim, starting with gender, age, voice, skin colour, continuing with modelling of facial features, selection of body type, hair, clothes, and accessories, to **personality traits**, **aspirations** and preferences. Players then continue to pick a customizable town and **build and furnish home** for their Sims to live in. The gameplay is one big customization process as well. Players are free to choose where to go, what to do, **what job to take** and **how relationships are handled**.

Hours and hours are sank into the **gameplay**, which **gets more personal and relatable** the more effort is put into it. The **linkage lies in the customization**. One can **re-create themselves, in a form of an idealized, virtual self**. Filling a town with relatives, friends,

favourite movie, book and video game characters, polish the customizable experience that **can be even shared with others**, as seen in Figure 4-15. The Sims 4 comes with **in-game tools** that allow **upload** and **download** of user-generated **content**, such as Sims and houses. Suddenly, the **value** of the Sims exceeds the **intrinsic** border and gains **extrinsic** character. Players create the content based on their personal lives, preferences, and aspirations and then project these values publicly. As of 2013 (before the release of The Sims 4) the franchise has sold **175 million copies worldwide**, making it the **eight, best-selling video game franchise** of all time. (Gaudiosi, 2013) Given the freedom of choice and the excessive ammount of content, it is no wonder that it achieved such status.



Figure 4-15: It is no problem to create an idealised self in The Sims 4 and marry the actress Angelina Jolie for example. Characters can be created and shared through in-game tools, with creator's name attached to them.  
Source: (Leack, 2014)

The **modding scene** reaches outside the integrated systems like Steam Workshop and The Sims 4 Gallery and uses **the world wide web** as a mean of **development, promotion, distribution** and **support**. The website MOD DB provide such platform for mods & patches. For example, **Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines unofficial patch** fixes the 2004's game's flurry of bugs. The plus patch then **restores unfinished content**, like hidden quests, maps, weapons, items, characters, dialogues, graphics, models, sound and music. The **game was practically finished by the modding community!**

The **project** has an **entrepreneurial character** and has been professionally handled by Wesp5, the mod's creator, who updates it and receives gamers' praise constantly, as seen in Figure 4-16. **12 years after its release**, the **game** is still being **kept in a operable state** for next generations of gamers to enjoy. Brand love this is. (MODDB, 2016)



Figure 4-16: Wesp5's Vampire the Masquerade – Bloodlines patch is essential to enjoy the game in full

Sometimes, the created output can be commercialized. **DotA** was a fan modification of the turn-based strategy Warcraft 3. This multiplayer online battle arena mod was **developed with the game's World Editor tool** and passed down to two other, voluntary developers. The original Defense of the Ancients map is still a popular game for international gaming tournaments (e-sports), but it has also received a sequel.

DotA is a prime example of **commercialization of the communal**. **Valve Corporation** **acquired rights** to DotA and released a sequel in July 2013. Valve have turned DotA 2 into a **widespread e-sports title**, **sponsoring** events across the world that are watched and attended by millions of gamers, as seen in Figure 4-17. The game also inspired Blizzard's Heroes of the Storm and Riot Games' League of Legends.

All three games have a **highly social, mass multiplayer online** character (MMO) and have integrated **socialization features** in form of an ingame **groups, chat** and character **animations**. Other cases of commercialization include the **DOS emulator DOSBox**, which is now bundled with retro DOS games on GOG; **open world, customizable video game Minecraft** that is now being sold (in millions) in a form of physical copies, even outside its native PC platform; a fan made StarCraft **MMO**, **StarCraft Universe**, supported by title's original developer Blizzard; and a **streaming service Twitch**, that has been bought by Amazon to host e-sports.





Figure 4-17: The story of DotA - from a custom map, designed in a level editor, to a global brand watched by millions

It is clear that **modding**, emulation, and **custom content** can be of value to the brand, but it **can also result in unwelcomed circumstances and presentation of the brand**. Modders can exploit the game and **cheat** their way through, even during an online match; **unlock content that was meant to be hidden** and/or paid for; make **pirate copies** of the title, which cuts revenues; or create **content** that is **of explicit character**.

For example, a hacker named DarkSide cheated his way through **Guild Wars 2** MMO and his character had to be “publicly executed” by the game’s developers, who even posted a video on YouTube for others to enjoy. In case of **Street Fighter IV**, the game’s files included locked premium content that was later found and made playable by curious fans, which resulted in criticism over a “planned cash grab”. Premium content for **The Sims 3** can be downloaded from many websites and added to the legally owned game, or a pirate copy. And lastly, **Bioshock Infinite**, a story focused shooter, received a modification (and fan art) that made the main female character naked. *"It's like coming across a picture of your daughter,"* replied Ken Levine, the game’s creator. (Good, 2013; Usher, 2012; Skipper, 2015) This **uncontrolled** and **morally questionable** behaviour is typical for **consumer tribes**. But sometimes this kind of content **can be exploited by market subjects themselves**. Like in the case of Ubisoft who used pirates’ “crack fix” to remove its own DRM protection from the digital versions of Rainbow Six Vegas 2. The community’s output was exploited and marketed as own, but it did not really mattered in this case, since piracy has its own legal issues to begin with,

## 4.5 The relationship value of gaming and the communal economy

As mentioned before, YouTubers, e-sports contestants and modders & creators can get sponsored by video gaming businesses. But the **sponsorship** can also be **communal**. **Crowdsourcing** has raised to prominence in last few years and is now a viable way of funding a title while **preserving creative independence**. Although there have been **issues** with game being **postponed**, **cancelled**, crowdsourced **money spent on personal expenses**, or the final product being of **poor quality**, **buggy**, or downright **unplayable**, positive examples of crowdfunding exist.

Two legendary, and author's most favourite, adventures received excellent **sequels** thanks to communal sponsorship, **The Longest Journey** and **Broken Sword**. A sequel to the psychedelic platformer **Psychonauts** is still under development, alongside the third entry to the open world action adventure **Shenmue**, which holds the record for the most backed video game project of all time. The crowdfunded sequel to Shenmue 2 raised **\$6,333,296** with the help of **69,320 backers**.

It is **not mandatory to continue with the same game brand however**, as gamers seem to recognize developers as well. **Yooka-Laylee**, a 90's style platformer, had been successfully funded and is about to re-create the magic of Rare's beloved platformers Banjo-Kazooie and Banjo-Tooie. Consisting of Rare's original members, Playtonic Games directly state on their web page that the game aims to "**build a spiritual successor to its (the studio's) most cherished work from the past.**" After launching the **Kickstarter campaign**, Playtonic Games **reached the £1 million goal in less than 24 hours** and ended with a **£2.1 million budget** backed by 80,000 gamers. Very similar was Larian Studios' attempt to create a prequel to a role playing game Divine Divinity. Larian Studios first crowdfunded **Divinity: Original Sin** and then, two years later, its sequel Divinity: Original Sin 2. Since the first game was so immaculate and the studio provided a free content & graphical upgrade for the PC version when releasing it for 8<sup>th</sup> generation of consoles, **gamers repeated their support** and backed **Divinity: Original Sin 2** with **\$2,032,434** as opposed to the \$944,282 of Divinity 1, **whilst developers requested only \$400,000 for Divinity 1 and \$500,000 for Divinity 2** as seen in Figure 4-19. (Reilly, 2015; PlaytonicGames, 2016; Twitter, 2015; Kickstarter, 2015; Kickstarter, 2013)

Additionally, the virtual reality helmet **Oculus Rift** stands for a piece of **hardware** that was **crowdsourced** via Kickstarter, similarly to the **Ouya** Android based console that did not meet such market success unfortunately. **Patreon** then serves as a crowdfunding portal for the two mentioned **YouTubers**, as shown in Figure 4-18.

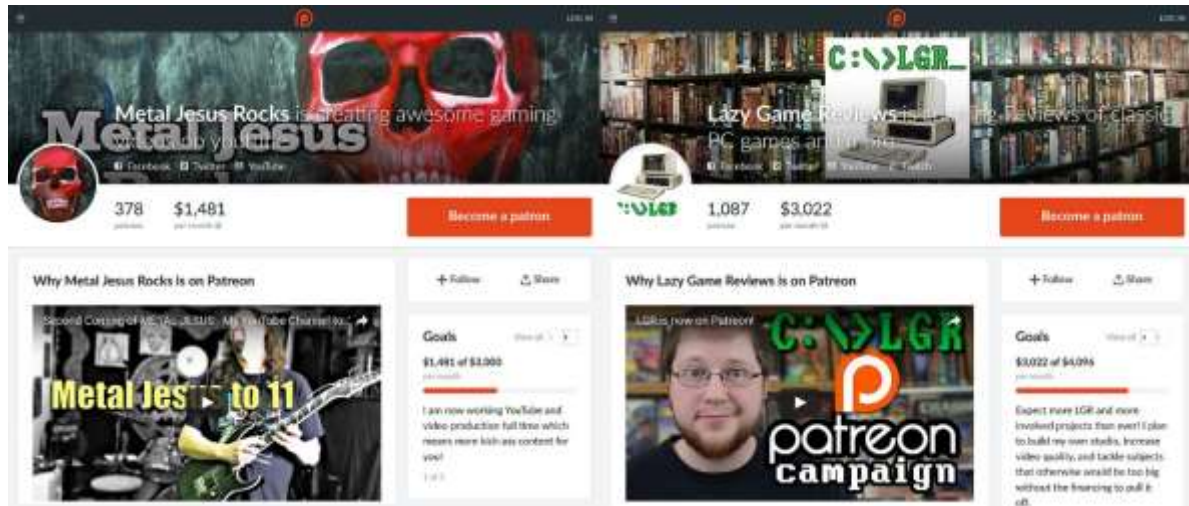


Figure 4-18: Lazy Game Reviews and Metal Jesus Rocks are YouTubers funded by their viewership  
Source: (Patreon, 2016)



Figure 4-19: Kickstarter campaign for Divinity: Original Sin 2 crowdfunded \$2,032,434. For a contribution of \$500, painting resembling the player is added to the game, for \$5,000 player's portrait is placed on the "Wall of Heroes" at developer's headquarters, and for \$10,000, player becomes a "high ranking" non-playable character in the game.  
Source: (Kickstarter, 2015)



As demonstrated with the Divinity case, crowdsourcing **can be used** to fund the product **repeatedly**. The **reason** behind this level of generosity may be seen in **RM theory**. The donator reward programme for Divinity 2 included **benefits** of **extrinsic** nature, placed from the \$100 donation upwards. For \$100, donators can roam the streets with a unique, branded hoodie that makes the wearer stand from the crowd and have their **name be forever engraved in the game's ending credits**. \$125 rank comes with a usable mug and a sticker pack, while the \$500 rank implements players directly in-game in a form of a portrait hanged at a random wall somewhere in the game. It's all very **expositional** and **visibly associates the gamer with the brand**. The \$5,000 rank is correctly labelled as “**ONE OF US**,” it gives donator a chance to attend the game's launch event, and confirms that **product consumption** serves as a mean to **gain access to a social group**, in this case, to a **brand community of Larian studios** and/or the **Divinity franchise**. It also verifies membership in the gaming subculture in general, as the \$10,000 donation places player in the game as a highly ranked story character. Similar strategies were used across many crowdfunding projects, including the sequel to The Longest Journey, Dreamfall Chapters, where were donators placed as in-game NPCs. Meanwhile in Psychonauts, one could design an in-game collectable. A T-shirt from the Kickstarter campaign for the first Divinity can be seen in Figure 4-20.



**Figure 4-20: Players openly project their love for gaming and affinity with certain brands and games. For example with this Divinity: Original Sin T-shirt.**  
*Source: (Divinityoriginalsin, 2013)*

The **intrinsic value** plays the crucial role in video game relationships and consists of **nostalgia & memories** and also of the **linking value** provided by **game's story** and **characters**. The famous Japanese RPG **Final Fantasy VII**, developed by Nintendo's former partner, Squaresoft, is a good example. To fully comprehend the impact of the title, one can browse through thousands of pages, posts and comments concerning the game and its **vast** and **branching story**. To write that the game is about a group of young people who want to save

the world from destruction would be an utter understatement, yet it is impossible to accommodate detailed description at the same time, since the story left many ends untied.

Final Fantasy VII was one of the first **emotional experiences** for many gamers. The death of one of the main characters moved many gamers to the point of creating **poems, stories, conspiracy theories, drawings, songs and videos**. The combination of deep story, **full motion video**, incredible **soundtrack**, unique **art** and **3D visuals** pushed gaming towards movie-like experience and **pleased all senses**. **Saving the world** from being hit by a giant meteorite and sucked dry of its energy was as powerful as it would have been in a book or a movie. The idea to stop an **evil company**, trying to **exploit resources for power and riches** was, and is **relatable** by everyone across the planet. That's what made Final Fantasy VII so appealing. The JRPG genre required players to spend a lot of time thinking about each character's development. Main protagonists level up as player encounter enemies in battles, they gain new abilities and increased statistics with each. FFVII is also **chockfull of** mini games and **side quests** that can be finished at player's leisure. The game takes about **61 hours to beat** so, with all that has been said, it is logical that **players can develop relationship with the world and its characters**.

The storytelling had become intensive during the fifth generation of gaming to which FFVII belonged, **revealing characters' backgrounds & social status, personality traits, motives, values and opinions**, as shown in Figure 4-21. The **attraction** came from **stunning visuals** and **presentation**, the **inner congruence** rose from character attributes and storyline, the **wish to maintain close proximity** and **frequent thought** were an outcome of brilliant gameplay and the **nostalgia still grows as gamers get older**.



**Ports** are easier to produce and require the **game's code to be “ported” to another hardware and/or to an operating system**. The more similar the hardware architecture and software background are, the easier the port is to execute. This is a great way for gamers to **enjoy their favourite games in an untouched state**. However, the vision of **easy money** often results in ports of **poor quality**, like the aforementioned Marvel Ultimate Alliance 1 & 2 for Steam, or the Xbox One ports of Xbox 360 action games Prototype 1 & 2 that faced slowdowns and screen tearing when played on the new, much more powerful hardware, with a **ridiculous price tag** of \$49.99. **Re-masters**, on the other hand, **alter the content to meet modern standards**. Game's **resolution is increased**, **in-game models and textures** are given a **high definition overhaul**, **sound** is either **re-recorded** or “retouched” to increase its clarity and the game can be expanded with **extra content**.

While being reasonable for old games like Final Fantasy VII, it seems that developers have **stopped producing new and original titles** and only focus on **re-releasing the same content over and over again**. This **plagues the 8<sup>th</sup> generation of gaming** greatly, but has been an old practice for Nintendo, who happens to indulge in such activities since the second generation of its video game presence, as shown in Figure 4-23.



Figure 4-23: Nintendo is typical for porting successful titles over and over again. On the picture is The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time, first released in 1998.

**Re-boots** present a **re-start** in the serie's history, which is accompanied with a **change** of game **genre**, **gameplay**, **controls**, **art style**, and even **characters' inner and outer design**. Similarly to music and movie industry, the title is usually kept in its original state, hence googling Tomb Raider, DOOM, Devil May Cry, Prince of Persia and Hitman results in dual results, as shown in Figure 4-24.



Given the fact that an **average gamer is 35 year old** and has **spent at least 13 years with gaming**, using any of these types of releases is only logical. (ESA, 2015) Veteran gamers are now in their **most productive years** and can afford to **support the brand** with **purchase** and **positive word of mouth**. **Young generation** seems to be **interested in** trying the “**gaming legends**” on their own, **while not sacrificing the “cool factor”** by playing the oldschool classics on **brand new systems**, with **cutting edge graphics**. To bring in his own experience, author waited approximately two minutes before purchasing the rebooted DOOM, one of the first games he has ever played and finished.

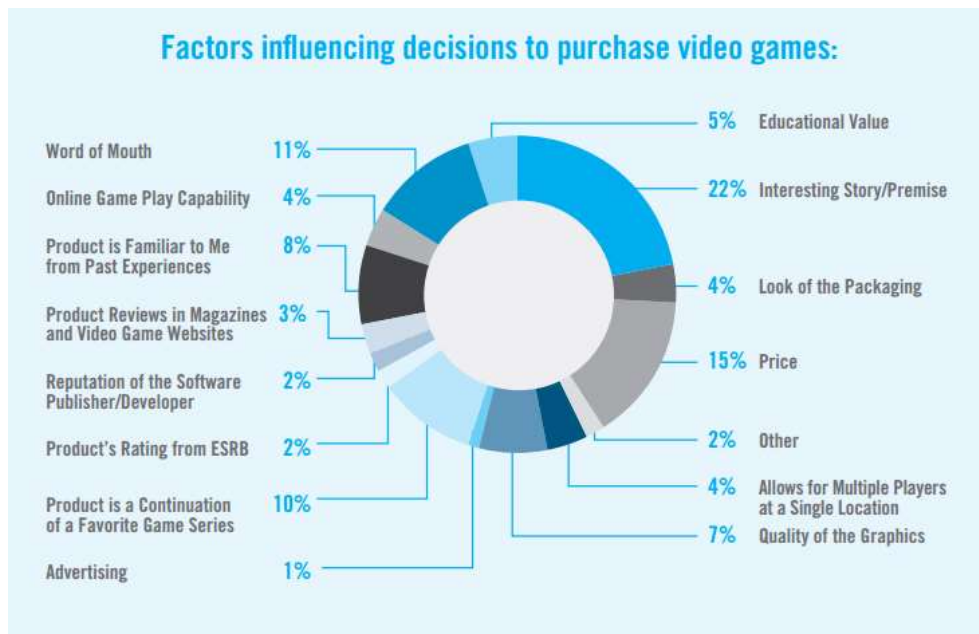


Figure 4-24: Legendary gaming series are re-booted to use brand reputation as a way to target the older generation and new generation of gamers alike.

To close the chapter with quantitative data, relationship aspects in gaming can be found among factors that influence consumer behaviour. (ESA, 2015) US respondents saw **interesting story/premise as the main driver behind purchase**, which encapsulates characters, their backstories, motives and traits etc. It is a linking instrument capable of fostering brand love, as already discussed before.

Price is a secondary factor and as history has shown, is important when purchasing both games and the system. **Word of mouth**, placed **third** in the ladder and is closely tied to **gatekeeping** and **social ambassadors**. People share their views of games, review them and filter the content for others. Fourth place relates directly to brand love and hints **purchase priority** when it comes to **continuations of favourite gaming series** and is assisted with the fifth place in the ladder, the **importance of past experiences, familiarity and shared history**.

**Four of the five top decision factors are relationship oriented**, as seen in Figure 4-25. Marketers **should not ignore relationship facilitation** even when being focuses solely on sales.



**Figure 4-25: Factors influencing decision to purchase video games point at importance of RM factors**  
*Source: (ESA, 2015)*

As demonstrated in this chapter, relationship aspects are firmly rooted in video game market's structure and touch the logistic chain from the very beginning of development to the final phase of post-purchase care. It is up to businesses to form strong relationships with gamers and to cooperate on principles of value co-creation that makes this communal and commercial exchange much more enjoyable and efficient. All parties will benefit in the end, which is both morally and economically welcomed prospect.

## 5 Netnography: The online research method

In accordance to goals chosen and its undeniable closeness to RM, author selected Netnography as the main research method. Both theories blend together well, as proven in chapter 2, and are modern enough to appreciate the phenomena of online socialization and communities.

**Netnography utilizes social science methods to conduct ethnographic research.** It combines **archival and online communications work**, includes **active participation and observation, data collection, analysis and final interpretation**. Knowledge of technology, **social media** and the phenomenon of **communities** are crucial for the methodology to be understandable in its full context. “Netnography is about obtaining cultural **understandings of human experiences from online social interaction and/or content**, and representing them as a form of research.” (Kozinets, 2015) Application varies from geography, sociology, to media studies, tourism, sexuality and gender research as well as game studies. In response to relationship marketing, Netnography reveals interaction styles, personal narratives, communal exchanges, online rules, practices, rituals and innovative forms of collaboration and manifestations of creativity. It goes hand in hand with unearthing **specific behaviour of online communities** and all the content they help to (co)create.

**Netnography, as a digital method**, is intelligently **adapted for the online ambiance** and thus all contemporary outputs of online communities can be exploited. This data is shared on the internet and serves as a base to this **participant-observational research**. Their download, **coding, analysis and reportage** create a backbone of Netnography. Although **utilization of other methods is not prohibited** and underlines the **flexibility** of the method.

**Many tools and techniques** are used in Netnographic research. **Big data analysis as well as discourse analysis (small data analysis)** take part in the method and are important for “painting the correct picture” about the studied subject/object. Netnography can **employ many research techniques should they help to answer the research question**. **Both quantitative and qualitative** information are looked for and are subject of analysis. **It is up to researcher’s intuition to choose appropriate techniques and approaches, as no dogma is desirable here.** Kozinets (2015) Among the methods are **surveys, interviews, social network analysis and netnographer’s personal journal**.

**Data** can be rich, as well as thin, with limited access or available to broad public, produced by a single person, group or co-produced with machines. Data can be collected in **real time**, as well as **ex-post** from archives. Collected information can be an outcome of an interactive conversation between the researcher and the individual or observed and gathered by researcher from afar. The data also come in a wide gamut of formats ranging from highly polished articles and forum posts to raw and crude text messages in a comment section. It is also vital to understand that the **researcher deals not only with words, but also with images, drawings, photography, sound files, presentations, website creations and other digital artefacts** (Kozinets, 2015).

Culture and communities are the target of Netnographic research, as well as a primary area of study for anthropology and sociology. However throughout years the concept of **culture and community** have become rather unstable, especially when applied online. Culture can be seen as a stable constellation of **symbols, rituals, language, religion, aesthetics** and many more, but it is also very flexible and evolves over time. Combined with technology, the online social realm changes very quickly and it is important to view it as liquid interactional element that individual members bring to life. The **traditions, customs, values and institutions** of the community all depend upon interacting individuals. The marketer must deal with contradictions, randomness and unpredictability that emerges from such system. (Kozinets, 2015) It also alienates the concept of segmentation that is built upon a premise of internal homogeneity. As such, it is desirable for **Netnographic researcher to partake in communities' activities** to get to their core beliefs and fluently adjust the value proposition if the results are being used for marketing purposes.

It is clear that Netnography goes beyond the traditional means and practices of ethnography and thus deserves to be handled as a separate term, even if it has its roots in this theory. Because of the wide variety of methods and tools, **it challenges the researcher's skills as an individual scholar, thinker, presenter, academic and a human being**. (Kozinets, 2015)

## 5.1 Ethnography and Netnography

Netnography has been **built on fundamentals of ethnography** and even though they should be viewed as separate terms, we can still observe the “building blocks” they share. In a broad sense, ethnography is a **participated observation method**, where the researcher (the ethnographer) **studies a culture, or society** and produces a written account of people, place or

institution. The method has been used in sociology, cultural and media studies, nursing, geography, marketing and management and many other fields. (Kozinets, 2015)

Kozinets (2015) identifies six fundamental **areas in which ethnography and Netnography differ**:

- 1) **Communication is altered** to suit the medium of internet. Some sites limit the number and **type of content** one can use, some sites censor them. Bringing our thoughts into a text, picture, symbol or video form can be challenging in its own right. The **speed and the frequency** of communication differs, the **timing** of the interaction varies as well as the people we speak with (internet helps us to feel anonymous, more empowered and helps us to cross **long distances**), the media we use limit the contents of a message and user's **vocabulary** is affected too. Networked self emerges as a strong concept, online self-presentation can be different from the offline, as online tools and customs are bore in mind by the online community,
- 2) **access** to different online groups and social media is much more easier to obtain. Internet works on a **participatory, egalitarian ethics** and thus **anyone can join in**, any group of any interest can exist and express themselves via this medium. Most of the **information**, which is present here in vast scale, is **public and available** for anyone. Even though language barriers still exist, **English** has become a new Esperanto for this medium. Anonymity still exists although is being diminished by networked individualism, which basically means presenting oneself as a brand, a subject with distinct personality and of course identity. Internet users are further stripped down of their anonymity as many websites and software require them to enter their personal details, contact information and track user on every step legally possible. This connects to the last aspect of this characteristic and that's surveillance, exhibitionism and voyeurism that is typical for inhabitants of the internet,
- 3) presence of **archived information** gives users tangible evidence of past interactions that would otherwise evaporate with the flow of time. Newhagen and Rafaieli (1996) consider the archives to be unmatched in every aspect. The content is easily observable, recorded and copied. Netnographers and marketers are given the luxury to thoroughly analyse the content of **past conversations**,
- 4) computer-based environment allows data to be mined, scraped, captured, automatically coded and monitored. **Analysis** offers wide spectrum of choices otherwise unavailable.

- 5) major **differences** occur **in** terms of **ethics**. Legal and moral systems have to be adapted , which is a problem considering the ever-changing environment,
- 6) engagement of big corporations and organizations has **colonized** online interactions. **Clash of commercial and communal** interests is ever-present,

In conclusion, we can see that the **sole core of both methods remains the same**, with **Netnography focused on technoculture** (our evolution alongside technology) **and social networks** that are mediated through means of IT. The last but certainly not least difference is that Netnography, compared to ethnography, focus groups and in depth interviews, is far less obtrusive and more naturalistic.

## 5.2 The spectrum of netnographies (typology)

It is possible to choose from **four ideal types** of Netnography: **Symbolic, Digital, Auto and Humanist**. Each one is suitable for different netnographers, sites, groups, cultures, topics, research questions and research purposes. **Data collection as well as analysis, interpretation and presentation are affected by the chosen type**. These types are: (Kozinets, 2015)

- 1) Symbolic Netnography relies on netnographer's linguistics skills as a platform of a textual interpretation. The interpretation is very technical and concerns a specific theory, which the netnographer mastered. The goal is to **describe** the sites/ groups/ cultures system of **values, practices, rituals, overall online social behaviour** and the depth and width of **created relationships**, cutting **across multiple disciplines and theories**, it resembles the traditional ethnography,
- 2) digital Netnography on the other hand relies on computer assisted interpretation of data in many shapes and forms, like text, pictures, graphs and tables. The interpretation is also very technical as it is in symbolic Netnography. The goal is to **describe the overall structure, form and statistics** of a site/ group/ culture/ topics through the **computerized analysis of large amounts of data**. Digital Netnography also unearths **patterns** and categories among (con)socialization participants.
- 3) auto-Netnography is based on netnographer's linguistic skills and his ability of introspection. The interpretation takes form of a simple, non-technical, storytelling in which the researcher shares his own inner development next to the studied group and the technology they adapted. The goal is to provide a **holistic description, the full picture** of the studied sites/ groups/ cultures/ themes. Crucial is the researcher's own

involvement, **actual membership** in the group, the **biographical** aspect, the **self-reflexion**, the revealing of his/her own vulnerability as he/she tells the story. It is **personal, intimate** and introspective writing about **netnographer's own online and offline experience** with the studied group/ culture/ theme.

- 4) humanist Netnography allows the use of computer assisted interpretation that is, however, concurrently humanized in a form of art to be more specific, understandable and to bear netnographer's "stamp of personality". It is about a topic/problem/culture/group that the researcher cares about; that others will care about. It is about **creating a message that resonates with people**, that changes their point of view. The goal is to **inspire** other people, **inform** them, influence them and **make a difference**. To make the **output accessible**, humanist netnographers work with graphic designers to make the material more understandable and likeable, and with programmers to **share the work**, the idea, the project, and increase the participation across the globe, **ignite the activism** and exchange ideas. It is vital to describe the situation in its **complexity**, being specific, linking it to a historical context, provide deep analysis, critique and interpretation. The final task is to link the topic and its social implications to the **global society** to **build understanding between people around the globe**, no matter the origin and **make the world a better place**.

## 5.3 Phases of Netnography

As with any other research method, Netnography is executed in a series of consecutive steps. It needs to be noted that these levels of the process are often overlapping in their contents and timing.

### 5.3.1 Introspection

Is a phase where the netnographer should reflect upon the **meaning of the research in his/her current life story**, this includes the understanding of one's own **interests** and **motivations** behind the researched topic.

However academically off this part may seem, self-reflection of the netnographer is necessary for the research to be "creative and expansive" as Kozinets (2015) states in his work. **Researcher**, no matter how he tries to be objective, **always interprets reality through the lens of his own being**. With that in mind, the self-reflective part of this thesis can **enlighten the chosen topic** as well as the final interpretations of the data. Anyone who will read the



research's results will know the **mental background of the netnographer** and can make his/her opinion about its objectivity. In general, the output of this phase should widely describe **who the netnographer is, what does he want** to achieve with the research and how these two correlate and combine in a **personal research strategy statement**. The questions answered should be: (Kozinets, 2015)

- Who am I? (basic demography, interests, beliefs, character, nationality, religion, age, gender, life goals etc.)
- What does the chosen topic mean to me?
- What do I want? How will this introspective knowledge affect my research?
- Research strategy statement: Who is the audience for this research? What you will be looking for? Where you will be looking for data? How you will be collecting, co-creating or producing your own data?

### 5.3.2 Investigation

Construction of a fundamental Netnographic question is a subject of the second, **investigation** phase. "*Netnographic research is based upon studies of Sites, Topics and People.*" (Kozinets, 2015) Prior to the **construction of the research questions**, a brief investigation about the topic must be undertaken. The question should be based on **study of sites**, topics or people, eventually on a study of related research papers.

### 5.3.3 Informational phase

In the **informational phase**, researcher should make ethical considerations. He/she must acknowledge acceptable research practices.

Because of the **sensitive nature of netnography**, which works on a basis of **intrusion into a "private" territory**, and the certain topics it revolves around (such as drugs, sexual orientation, abortions, alcohol use and many more) a series of **ethical principles** need to be taken into account when conducting a netnography. In some cases the themes that are amidst of the research may not be controversial in any manner, but an adequate level of politeness should always be fulfilled. Tom Boellstroff (2012) formulates basic guidelines that deal with ethics:

1. The principle of care: informants should gain some kind of a **reward** for participating in the research,

2. **informed consent**: netnographer should **inform the community about his/her presence** and about the character and **purpose of the research**, asking for permission if needed. Netnographer should also ask for **authorization to directly quote** members or **use** their “**cultural artefacts**”, in other words their **creations**,
3. institutional and legal risks: netnographer needs to **know the “rules”**, whether they are bound with the actual **social medium** (forum rules for example) or with **law in general** (for example data collection and storage),
4. **anonymity**: participants of the research should remain anonymous and the netnographer should ensure that the published data cannot be used for backtracking to a specific member of the community. This often requires **tempering with data**, such as changing usernames, altering photos, obfuscating the website’s name and such. Releasing **aggregate statistics** deals with the question of anonymity effectively. The other option is to **gain informed consent and publish the data as-it-is**, giving full credits to the author (who may be proud of his/her work and want to be rightfully acknowledged for it),
5. **deception**: practices such as creating **fake identities**, **lying** about one’s interests, occupation, nationality, gender etc. should be **avoided**. In some cases however, deceptive role play allowed the researcher to delve deep into the topic, as in case of Katrien Jacobs’ (2010) research of sexual behaviours and self-representations,
6. sex and intimacy: intimate and **sexual relationships** should be **avoided**,
7. doing good and **compensation**: netnographer should strive for **positive impact** on the studied community, for example by **content-creation** or gifts,
8. taking leave: is to politely **prepare the community for your departure**,
9. accurate and empathic portrayal: netnographer should be **empathic when interpreting the data**, avoiding being overly negative and judgemental of the informants and their socio-cultural background.

### 5.3.4 Interview

**Interview** stage comprises of **finding the ideal people or sites to investigate**. It does not have to be focused on a **single website, place or a group**, instead the focal point can be the **topic of interest**. Both options are possible and allow use of **multiple sources**.

Kozinets (2015) provides helpful framework for a site selection. The medium should be **relevant** to the research questions, be **active**, the users should **interact** with each other, the

**communication** between them needs to be **substantial**, the participants have **something in common**, the **data is rich in form** and the site provides **experience to netnographer**.

### 5.3.5 Inspection

**Inspection** consist of selection of specific site, multiple sites, topics, people or groups. Although Kozinets doesn't specifically mention the contents of this phase, author suggests that a **detailed description of the community** is the subject. This can include giving basic information about the community its demographics, history, defining its network structure, type of socialization experience, describing used language, jargon and forms of communication, also stating the content (the artefacts) that are shared through the interactions and the topics they revolve around.

### 5.3.6 Interaction

Making an **entrée** and **introducing oneself** to the community is a part of the interaction phase. This activity is executed in order to ensure fairness and **transparency** towards the group that is being studied. The amount of information can be scarce or plentiful and depends on individual circumstances. Separate website for the research can be created.

The netnographer should always **disclose his/her presence**. He/she should be honest, never deceive, intimidate or confuse. (Kozinets, 2015) Actual **purpose and affiliations must be stated** at the beginning of the research, as part of the entrée phase, which is closely related to ethics.

Kozinets (2015) recommends **creating a personal website and/or blog to spark the interaction** and deepen the engagement in the topic. Kozinets (2015) recommends **altering the researcher's user profile**, whether it be on Facebook, forum, or in a virtual world, so it would **signalize that he/she is conducting the research**.

### 5.3.7 Immersion

Netnographer dives into the endless ocean of information that is available. The meticulous process of **data collection** is encapsulated in this phase. Data are thought as more than just raw materials, in the context of Netnography, they represent evidential components. (Kozinets, 2015) Netnographer must master the act of **deduction**, **induction** and even **abduction** of data, enabling him/her to connect keywords that are otherwise considered to be of separate matter. (Kozinets, 2015) Due to this fact, **data can be gathered from multiple**

**sources, linked and combined to create a full picture. Then used to spark further discussion.**

**Netnographer should try to include data in their own wide gamut of variety, yet is permitted to view it from his/her own subjective viewpoint. He/she also has the right to choose what will be the source of data and what not.**

With these characteristic in mind, data collection should operate in three phases (Kozinets, 2015):

- 1) Provide an **atmospheric overview** of the specific research question, which is achieved first with **content selection** and augmented with **content skimming** or **keyword analysis**,
- 2) **collect data** that concern the topic, **co-create** the answer to the questions by active **involvement in a discussion** and/or by **fusing and remixing the collected data**. Include **at least one viewpoint that would stray from the general consensus** and expand knowledge of the topic,
- 3) write a **self-reflective**, immersed **reaction** to the question concerned (**field notes**).

Overall, the data used in Netnography are **collected** (archival data that users produce), **co-created** (what netnographer contributes to a discussion and what he/she fuses together) and **produced** (the netnographer's own inner experience, a.k.a. the field notes).

### 5.3.8 Indexing

**Indexing** phase ensures that the **right amount of data** is collected from a variety of relevant sources. Netnographer **should not strive for data completion**, selecting the right data that would enlighten the topic in general is more appropriate.

A series of tools can be used to capture and process the selected data. Both **small data** (such as highly **contextual, in-depth, analysis of text, pictures or videos**) and **big data** (consisting of aggregate, generalizable **statistics**) can be collected and analysed. These data capture techniques are applicable to both **collected (archive)** and **co-created type of data**.

The third type of data is the **reflective data** that represent the unfolding human experience of being-in-the-network. (Kozinets, 2015) Netnographer writes **field notes** to capture the experience of encountering and learning **about the specific topic and the**

**community itself.** They strive to capture authors **own impressions, subjective meanings of interaction** and events as he/she experiences them materializing over time. (Kozinets, 2015).

### 5.3.9 Interpretation

A crucial phase of **interpretation** is dependent on researchers individual skills as he or she tries to **make sense of all the data collected.** All is seen through the lens of an individual.

Netnography utilizes **analysis, hermeneutics and synthesis** for the data interpretation. Analysis represents the act of breaking down a problem into a **singular components,** hermeneutics deal with recognition of the whole within its parts (the **connection**) and synthesis is used to combine the pieces together to get the **full image.** (Kozinets, 2015) The author creates a collage of those pieces and in addition, paints and draws over them to **incorporate his/her own story into the data.** (Kozinets, 2015)

An interpretation of even the **smallest elements** of the gathered artefact (like colours of a picture, mimics, symbols, haptic or the use of adjectives, formal or informal language, icons, memes, punctuation in a text etc.), then piecing these elements together into one whole. Do they have something in common? What are the keywords? Do they contradict? Are they in harmony? Which piece is a part of another piece? The analysis must be executed in a very detailed manner that includes the **manual decomposition of singular words/images/sounds** but also provides an **atmospheric overview** that can be done **via software like the word cloud generator.**

### 5.3.10 Iterations

**Iterations** and **alterations** within the previous phases are sometimes necessary. Continuous meditation over the selected topic ignites the need for finding additional data, combining new theories and generating further knowledge.

### 5.3.11 Instantiation

**Instantiation** phase deals with **presentation** of the findings in a selected manner. **The output is created, fabricated and curated in a very personal way.** It opens space for personal interpretation and understanding that is mixed with personal narratives, **netnographer's own story.** From perspective of a mathematician or economist, it's a messy interpretation, its void of numbers, graphs and dogmas produced through calculation and statistics. The conclusions of such work can hardly be used as a framework for future research as no truth with a capital T

is truly provable. In this manner, the representation of data is a complex **mix of netnographer's own reality and the reality of others, fixed in context and subjective interpretation.**

**Quantitative data, visual, audio-visual, poetic, purely textual, theoretical and abstract form of representation can partake in Netnography.** And as written before both data collection, analysis and even representation are affected by the chosen type of Netnography.

### 5.3.12 Integration

The last step in conducting Netnographic research is the **integration**. This encapsulates **pairing the research questions with answers, publication of the results**, recommending actions and even inducing a **change**.

## 5.4 Netnographical research of the Tomb Raider Forums

The legendary **Tomb Raider video game franchise, starring Lara Croft**, was chosen as the **studied brand**. A set of **3 separate pre-researches** about TR and LC was done **prior to the main, relationship research**. Understanding the franchise's **history and development**, its **cultural impact, symbolism** and the **main protagonist** herself, served as a crucial foundation for selecting a suitable approach towards research questions. **Self-reflective meditation** based on **author's experience with video games and Tomb Raider** was necessary to fully **realize the complexity and impact of both**. All analyses helped author to **unearth sub-topics** and to **create research questions**

**Among the analyses that formed this complex research were:**

- 1) Self-reflection about video games, Tomb Raider & Lara Croft,
- 2) online investigation about the topic TR & LC,
- 3) author's gameplay notes from the latest TR title,
- 4) core value analysis of Lara Croft, as portrayed during each release through artwork and in-game footage,
- 5) netnography focused on online socialization and relationship potential of the chosen community and the brand.

### 5.4.1 Tomb Raider and video games: the introspection

Prior to any research activities, a **self-reflective essay was written by author**. It was **focused** not only on **Tomb Raider**, but **also** on **video games in general**. The text which inspects author's life alongside his favourite past time & video game character is available in **Appendix 1**.

The **research strategy statement was put into a form of TRF introductory post and introduction video**. The **introductory post** can be seen in **sub-chapter 5.4.7** and the **transcript of the introductory video** can be found in **Appendix 2**.

The act of introspection **helped** author to **generate plenty of questions** about video games and was also **crucial** when it came **to understanding** the Tomb Raider franchise. During the main, relationship research, author has stumbled over his own thoughts many times, but they were not spoken by him, but by members of the researched community. It was interesting to see, how similar these thoughts were, when they were constructed independently and across the globe. For author, **video games and Tomb Raider go deeper than an average entertainment product and link with a person on many levels**, covering all the bases for strong brand love.

Also, it is important to note that self-reflection essay was **not only useful to draw research questions, but also to define their specific content in a questionnaire**.

### 5.4.2 Investigation: creating the research question

Several **websites about Tomb Raider** were **investigated** to find inspiration and to formulate **additional research questions** to those that have already emerged from the phase of self-reflection. Secondly, **series' legacy** was **investigated to define Lara Croft as she was imagined by her developers**, which was later used to compare the defined, perceived and ideal Lara.

#### 5.4.2.1 *Online investigation about TR and Lara Croft:*

Several sites were explored upon **typing Tomb Raider into the Google search engine**. Regular **website** as well as **social media sites** such as **Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs, fan fiction sites**, and **Deviantart** were explored. The content included official visual material and texts, screenshots, videos, fan art and discussions. The investigation analysis can be found in **Appendix 3**.



From all of the inspected online content, two key-word clouds were formed, as seen in Figure 5-1. These selections of words served as a broad **overview** of the topic of Tomb Raider franchise and helped with formulating further inquiries. Author took into account not only the text given, but also visual material (such as pictures and videos) and overall atmosphere of a site. The mass of accumulated words was **split between Lara Croft and Tomb Raider** and its **results** were **used** as selectable options in the **RM focused questionnaire (Appendix 5)**.



Figure 5-1: Keyword clouds generated from the online investigation

To summarize the investigation, Tomb Raider and Lara Croft have consistent image across all media, no matter the source. Tomb Raider is about a brave, independent, sexy and iconic archaeologist Lara Croft who explores beautiful, solitary, and historical locations. The game is an action adventure with thick atmosphere, thrilling gunplay and exploration that leads towards discovery. Lara has to overcome the wilderness and traps laid before her, often dealing with severe injuries, and prove her determination for reaching artefacts she strives for, which is supported by her comic book persona and thus strength, exquisite acrobatic skills, and self-confidence. Because of that, Lara Croft is a role model for many, an inspiration for marginalised (namely LGBT community) and a sexual interest for some. The game's long history comes along with nostalgia, cultural symbolism, records & awards, and grants it credibility and awareness that serves as a base for promoting the game for old and young generations of gamers alike. Gaming community is aware of differences between the old and new generation of Tomb Raider games and critical comparisons are often made, aimed on the game (logical puzzles, higher difficulty and solitary feeling vs. gunplay, accessibility and movie production) and Lara herself (comic book Lara vs. vulnerable Lara). As the first sentence hints, old blends well with new and the series is recognizable because of distinct symbolism that comes from Lara's looks and game mechanics.

The online investigation and self-reflection also revealed **one crucial information** that affected the RM research, **Lara Croft is the linking instrument of the brand**, because she **stands for values** fans can relate to.

#### 5.4.2.2 *Lara Croft, as imagined by developers:*

The history of **Lara's character**, as imagined by Core Design and Crystal Dynamics, can be found in **Appendix 4**. This **sub-research** was done in order to specify Lara's official **personality traits** and **behavioural characteristics** and to confront them with those wished for by TRF community. Quantitative analysis, done from data collected with RM questionnaire, revealed **discrepancies among iterations** of Lara Croft that came with each release and **between the official and the fan portrayal of the heroine**. This revealed **brand's core values, consistency** and **aspects of brand ownership**.

The analysis included contemplation over official **box covers, promotional artwork** and **in-game cut-scenes** and **FMVs**. A total of **8 hours of video footage**, taken from YouTube, was **decomposed second by second**, representing a **netnography in its own right**. Author generated the following table of personality traits.

Figure 5-2: Major values of the Lara Croft brand

Lara's character	TR I	TR II	TR III	TR TLR	TR AoD	TR L	TR A	TR U	RotTR
Analytical	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Apologetic						x	x		x
Athletic	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Believes in supernatural	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Business woman	x		x		x	x	x	x	
Caring		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Competitive					x	x			x
Conscientious					x	x	x		x
Courageous	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Crafty	x		x	x		x		x	x
Deadly	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Destructive	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Determined	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Doubtful					x	x	x		x
Educated	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Eloquent & persuasive	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Empathic		x	x	x		x	x		x
Formal/ well mannered		x	x			x			
Globetrotting	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Gullible			x	x	x			x	x

Lara's character	TR I	TR II	TR III	TR TLR	TR AoD	TR L	TR A	TR U	RotTR
Heroic			x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Incorruptible				x	x		x		x
Inquiring	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Intelligent	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Leader (manager)					x	x		x	
Merciful		x	x	x		x		x	x
Mysterious	x	x		x	x				
Narcissistic/ self-absorbed						x			
Observant		x		x	x	x		x	x
Patient	x	x	x	x	x			x	
Remorseful						x	x		x
Self-confident	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Self-reflective						x	x	x	x
Skilled in languages	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Skilled with IT & modern technologies		x			x	x		x	x
Skilled with vehicles, mechanisms & tools	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Smiling	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Spectacular (grandiose)	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Stealthy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Stubborn					x			x	x
Teachable	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Trait is absent									
Trait is present	x								
Trait is significant									

As is shown in Figure 5-2, a staggering number of personality traits and behavioural patterns were identified for each release. However, the figure is not representative of each and every trait identified. **107 separate traits emerged** from the analysis and were either **left out** for the lack of their re-appearance, **fused** with other traits or **transformed** into separate questions. The full list can be seen at the end of **Appendix 4**.

The **most important traits** were chosen to become **separate questions**. Within these questions, author has **evaluated each iteration of Lara Croft with a fitting answer**, derived from re-visiting the prior analysis and video footage multiple times. Figure 5-3 was utilized **for comparison between the official portrayal of Lara and TRF community's ideal**, which was added after the anylsis of data collected with the RM questionairre.

Figure 5-3: Characteristics of Lara Croft per release

Nr.	Question	TR-I	TR-II	TR-III	TR-TLR	TR-AoD	TR-L	TR-A	TR -U	RotTR	Ideal Lara
1	<b>Social status</b>	Adventurer/ Mercenary	Adventurer	Adventurer/ Mercenary	Adventurer	Adventurer/ Marginalised	Adventurer/ Aristocrat	Adventurer/ Mercenary	Adventurer/ Aristocrat	Survivor/ Marginalised/ Adventurer	<b>Adventurer/ Aristocrat/ Marginalised</b>
2	<b>Teamwork</b>	No team	No team	No team	In a team, operates alone	In a team, goes exploring with her	In team, supports her online	No team	In a team, operates alone	In a team, goes exploring with her	No team
3	<b>Dependence</b>	Independent	Independent	Independent	Somewhat dependant	Dependent	Dependent	Independent	Somewhat dependant	Very dependent	Independent
4	<b>Help &amp; trust</b>	Doesn't share problems	Doesn't share problems	Doesn't share problems	Shares problems, asks for advice	Shares problems, delegates work	Shares problems, delegates work	Doesn't share her problems	Shares problems, delegates work	Shares problems, delegates work	Shares problems, asks for advice
5	<b>Stance towards authority</b>	Listens, decides on her own	Listens to no one	Listens, decides on her own	Listens, decides on her own	Follows command if part of a team	Follows command if part of a team	Listens, decides on her own	Listens to no one	Follows command of authorities	Listens, decides on her own
6	<b>Past &amp; relationships</b>	No past	No past	No past	Structured backstory	Structured backstory	Heavy past	Structured backstory	Heavy past	Heavy past	Brief past/ Structured backstory
7	<b>Lara's partner</b>	Alone	Alone	Alone	Has a partner, background	Has partner, work together	Alone	Alone	Has partner, work together	Has partner, work together	No partner
8	<b>Partner relationship</b>	No partner	No partner	No partner	Very close friend	Flirt	No partner	No partner	Business deal/ Very close friend	Very close friend	No partner
9	<b>Family</b>	No family	No family	No family	No family	No family	Involved in the main story	Involved in the main story	Involved in the main story	Involved in the main story	Mentioned in a backstory

Nr.	Question	TR-I	TR-II	TR-III	TR-TLR	TR-AoD	TR-L	TR-A	TR -U	RotTR	Ideal Lara
10	<b>Motives</b>	Sportive/ Heroic	Sportive/ Knowledge	Sportive/ Heroic	Heroic	Relationships/ Heroic	Relationships	Relationships/ Sportive/ Heroic	Relationships	Relationships/ Heroic	Sportive/ Knowledge
11	<b>Stance towards wealth</b>	Shown being wealthy	Shown being wealthy	Shown being wealthy	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Uses & enjoys	Shown being wealthy	Shown being wealthy	Uses from necessity	Shown being wealthy
14	<b>Skill level</b>	Superhero	Superhero	Semi-realistic	Semi-realistic	Semi-realistic	Superhero	Superhero	Superhero	Realistic	Semi-realistic
16	<b>Voice &amp; expression</b>	Joking (4)/ Ironic (2)/ Strong (2)/ Thoughtful (2)	Strong (3)/ Joking (2)/ Ironic (1)	Joking (6)/ Thoughtful (4)/ Ironic (3)/ Strong (3)/ Worried (2)/ Passionate (1)	Strong (8)/ Joking (7)/ Thoughtful (7)/ Worried (3)/ Ironic (2)/ Passionate (2)	Strong (17)/ Joking (11)/ Thoughtful (9)/ Ironic (6)/ Worried (6)/ Passionate (4)	Thoughtful (14)/ Worried (13)/ Passionate(10)/ Joking (10)/ Strong (9)/ Ironic (8)	Strong (15)/ Thoughtful (8)/ Worried (7)/ Joking (6)	Thoughtful (26)/ Strong (19)/ Joking (8)/ Worried (5)/ Ironic (2)/ Passionate (2)	Worried (47)/ Thoughtful (36)/ Passionate (29)/ Strong (24)/ Joking (4)	Ironic/ Strong/ Joking/ Thoughtful
17	<b>Talkativeness</b>	Occasional (40%)	Rare (15%)	Often (57%)	Occasional (39%)	Often (66%)	All the time (78%)	Occasional (43%)	Often (70%)	All the time (83%)	Occasional (46 %)
18	<b>Self-control</b>	Cold headed	Cold headed	Cold headed	Mildly emotional	Mildly emotional	Loses control	Mildly emotional	Cold headed	Very emotional	Mildly emotional
19	<b>Escape scene</b>	Challenging	Exhausting	Self- confident	Self- confident	Challenging	Challenging	Self-confident	Challenging	Exhausting	Challenging
20	<b>Escapes from a fight?</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
21	<b>Shown being helpless</b>	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
22	<b>Injuries</b>	Doesn't get injured (0/ 0%)	Gets injured, passes out (3/ 23%)	Gets injured, recovers quickly (5/ 36%)	Doesn't get injured (1/ 3%)	Gets injured, recovers quickly/ passes out (4/ 9%)	Doesn't get injured (1/ 1,6%)	Doesn't get injured (0/ 0%)	Doesn't get injured (3/ 6,98%)	Gets injured, passes out (28/ 24%)	Gets injured, recovers quickly

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>TR-I</b>	<b>TR-II</b>	<b>TR-III</b>	<b>TR-TLR</b>	<b>TR-AoD</b>	<b>TR-L</b>	<b>TR-A</b>	<b>TR -U</b>	<b>RotTR</b>	<b>Ideal Lara</b>
24	<b>Approach to danger</b>	Direct gunfire	Direct gunfire	Direct gunfire/ Assassination	Direct gunfire/ Assassination	Assassination/ Escape/ Direct gunfire	Direct gunfire/ Assassination	Direct gunfire	Direct gunfire	Tactical shooting/ Assassination/ Escape	Tactical shooting
25	<b>Murderer</b>	Maybe	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Maybe
26	<b>Kill when not necessary</b>	To get rid of barriers	No	To get rid of barriers	No	No	Avoids, but kills for her quest	Avoids, but kills for her quest	No	No	Avoids, but kills for her quest
27	<b>Swearing</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No (1 time)	Overwhelming situations (19 times)	Overwhelming situations
28	<b>Preferred weaponry</b>	Ranged	Ranged	Ranged	Ranged	Combination (more ranged)	Ranged	Combination	Combination (more ranged)	Combination (more mele)	Combination (more ranged)
33.7	<b>Sex as part of Lara's persona</b>	3 (medium)	4 (high)	5 (highest)	3 (medium)	2 (low)	3 (medium)	1 (very low)	1 (very low)	1 (very low)	3 (medium)
33.9	<b>Lara acts seductive</b>	1 (very low)	4 (high)	5 (highest)	3 (medium)	1 (very low)	3 (medium)	1 (very low)	1 (very low)	1 (very low)	3 (medium)

Looking at the results out-of-the-box, author realized how complex can a video game character be and how **many opportunities for customer-brand linkage exist**. Any of Lara's personal traits, skills or behavioural patterns can serve as a **relationship bridge between the brand and gamers and among gamers themselves**.

#### 5.4.2.3 Author's TRoTR notes:

Author had also played the **newest instalment in the series, The Rise of the Tomb Raider**, released **January 2016**. Following notes were taken from the first to the last minute of gameplay (**23 hours** in total), seen in Figure 5-4. Scribbled notes, captured at the same second the game stimulated author's brain with its content, **helped** in the same manner as the previous, web crawl analysis, to **generate content for the RM questionnaire**.

The Rise of Tomb Raider Notes			
Positive	Neutral	Negative	Ideas
Beautiful graphics Collapsing temples and escape sequences Immersion in surroundings (animation + sounds) Existing cultures/civilizations - interesting Exploration, revelation, secrets, treasure Lara is clever Lara shows emotions Underwater kills Flunet jump/ climb mechanic After Jonah's "death", Lara gets angry and kicks ass - first time I felt like playing Lara Croft again Grapple axe tool feels feral Some beautiful locations (golden shrines, rock sculptures, waterfalls, mysterious hidden city) "Not strong enough". Add reference? Challenge tombs with puzzles!	Hints Violence Explicit language Anna sounds like Natalie from TRU Upgrades seem useless No treasures outside challenge tombs Swimming is limited	Lara doesn't look like Lara I hate open world format - generic side quests, forced travelling and backtracking - time consuming chore Gore in the "greek fire" level Animal violence TRoTR - Skyrim - monotonous design vs. old TR - Oblivion - varied levels and visuals Auto-highlight features kill the exploration (traps, tombs, tracking animals) Canon violation! (Lara's backstory, her mother) No dual pistols Story - Christianity: Jacob - Jesus Jacob is generic Jacob risked Lara's life, he knew where the entrance to the temple was, liar, self-absorbed idiot! Some levels - Gears of war - cover shooter Repetitive and boring story logs - I didn't care about anyone besides Lara and her friend bla bla prophet almighty, bla bla follow him 'till the end of the world bla bla all die bla bla poverty bla bla illness) Many ugly locations (dirt, mud, slush, industrial waste, metal)	Do religious theme and cultural connections positively impact the individual's gaming experience? I upgraded exp gain and carrying capacity first. Am I greedy? Completionist? I bought a new PC, mainly because of this game Did anyone else shoot the evil Anna when she hanged down with Lara? Did anyone spared Constantine? We play games because of the feeling we can change the world Do we play games to escape reality? (I have so much work to do and I am playing a game instead)

Figure 5-4: Author's RotTR notes

As easily noticed from notes, author has scribbled down notes concerning **story**, **gameplay mechanics** and **visuals**. The first, positive **impression** and (additional) desire to play the game was accounted to the **cutting edge graphics**. Author seemed to care about the **design stylization** and **craved for "beautiful locations"** that were scarce in the game. Brand love emerged as author noticed **references** and **similarities with old TR games (brand knowledge)**



and had a **clear idea how “real” Lara Croft should look like and act (brand ownership)**. Story and characters were **perceived mostly negatively** as the **religious theme did not link** with author **on the value level** (people blindly follow prophet and die for him; mistake illness with demonic possession; torture the “non-believers” and many more).

**Important and expected game elements of TR** could be derived: thrill, action, exploration (non-assisted), puzzles, discovery, swimming, acrobatics, free-to-use gadgets, beautiful locations, respect for past games/ canon story, rather linear but challenging level design, focused more on beauty than gore, varied in design, puzzles and exploration should be accompanied by gunplay (not vice versa), linkage to existing cultures and past events.

**Important Lara’s characteristics** could be derived as well: tough, kick-ass, crafty, intelligent, educated, emotional, good language skills (knowledge of languages + proper grammar), equipped with dual pistols.

#### **5.4.2.4 Research questions**

From information written in the **self-reflection essay, Netnography and RM theory**, it was possible to generate main research questions, arranged in **three categories** according to their origin.

Questions generated with the **video game self-reflection** and **Tomb Raider self-reflection** often **overlapped**. Gaming self-reflection questions, such as “create, share and play” and “horror and violence”, were partially included in the RM questionnaire and were searched for in the nethnographical part as well.

#### **Questions emerging from Netnography and online socialization**

- What are the basic **characteristics** of TRF (form, demography, language)?
- What is the **network structure** of the forum?
- What **type of socialization experience** does TRF provide?
- How does **networked individualism** materialize on the forum?
- What are the **discussed topics**?
- **What content**, and in which **form** is shared among its users?
- Is there a **connection to other** social media and groups?
- Do **sub-groups** exist?

### Questions emerging from relationship marketing theory

- What **type of communitas** does TRF present?
- What **aspects of an offline community** are **re-created** on TRF?
- Does the community participate in the **process of co-creation**? If yes, **what, why, and how** do they create such content?
- Does TRF have its **mavens**?
- Do the developers/ publishers include TRF in a **brand network orbit**? If yes, **how**?

### Questions emerging from TR self-reflection

- How does **ideal video game character** (Lara Croft) **look like**?
  - Lara Croft, the hero
    - Who is Lara Croft? What are her **core traits**?
    - Has Lara's persona been **consistent** over the years?
    - How does an **ideal Lara Croft** look like?
    - Does the ideal **deviate from the official** portrayal?
  - Lara Croft, the (sex) icon
    - Do gamers **look up to Lara**? Is she inspirational?
    - How is Lara's sexuality and "**sexiness**" perceived?
    - What are fans' stances towards **gender swapping** and **cosplay**?

#### 5.4.2.5 Sections of the research and the main research goal

***"The central research goal was to assess relationship potential of the Tomb Raider Forums community and the Tomb Raider franchise."***

The RM research was split into **2 major parts**:

- I. Analysis of the **TRF community** from **Netnographical** and **relationship perspective**,
  - where the **most important** "questioning" took form of a **sole Netnography**. The **goal** was to **reveal patterns of online socialization on TRF** and to **analyse the community from RM perspective**. As such, no questionnaire was created for this section, as it relied on continuous analysis of community's artefacts,
- II. additional analysis of **relationship potential of the Tomb Raider franchise**, focused on the main protagonist **Lara Croft**, where:
  - **self-reflection about Lara Croft**,

- **online investigation** of the topic **Tomb Raider** (across variety of social media),
- **author's own play-through** of the latest Tomb Raider title
- and **audio-visual material of each TR title**,

were used to create specific research questions about personality traits and behavioural characteristics of Lara Croft. This would form **the RM questionnaire 1** (as available in **Appendix 5**), **forum post number 2** (available in **Figure 5-10**) and **forum post number 3** (**Figure 6-101**).

### 5.4.3 Netnography selection

Based on the knowledge about oneself and the Tomb Raider franchise, author decided to **choose Symbolic Netnography**. The goal of the study was to describe **relationships** among members of the TRF community and their relationship with the TR franchise in general. It is a **study about the brand and the community**, in a **qualitative manner**.

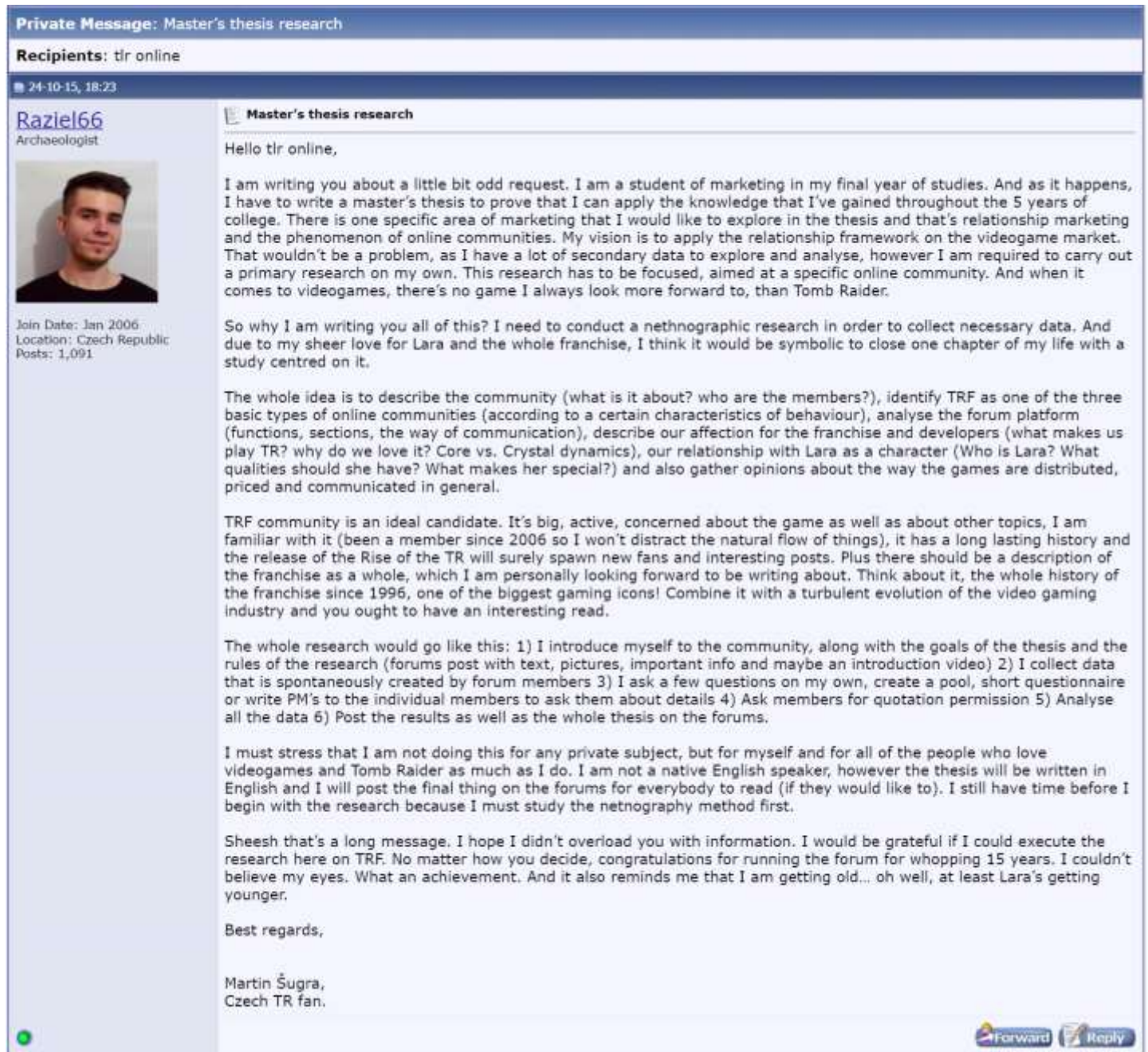
Humanist Netnography would not be suitable as it deals with an important topic, with a problem that people should know about, it is focused on motivating towards global change. Surely, topics like videogame violence, sexism, animal cruelty or any other societal repercussion of the videogame could be exposed, but this is a non TR exclusive matter.

Auto-Netnography could provide a more in-depth results, however it is too qualitatively based and focused on the netnographer. With relationship marketing in mind, the author, as a future absolvent of marketing, wants to focus more on the community than oneself, provide statistical data in a reasonable amount to make the fellow economists happy, and also try to practice the outlook of the “outsider”, even though he could surely wrote the research in an autobiographical manner, given the topic he is closely involved with.

Finally, the **Digital Netnography** was considered a viable alternative. It would produce enough tables, graphs, maps and numbers that any economist would love. But it is way too detached, way too impersonal and technical. The author could not imagine studying a topic he loves from such distance, but also is aware of the **practical output** of this style. And since Netnography is deemed as a flexible method, **author decided to also collect qualitative data and use software to make the study more accessible, well-structured and pleasing to the eye**.

## 5.4.4 Ethical perspective and pre-launch communication

Kozinets (2015) suggests that the netnographer should contact the sites **gatekeeper**, i.e. the person who owns the medium or supervises it to **gain permission for the research**. Author **contacted the forum administrator and owner Justin**. The **first contact** was done **on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015** via the **personal message tool (PM)** available on the site and read as follows (Figure 5-5)



**Private Message: Master's thesis research**

**Recipients:** tjr online

24-10-15, 18:23

**Raziel66**  
Archaeologist

Join Date: Jan 2006  
Location: Czech Republic  
Posts: 1,091

**Master's thesis research**

Hello tjr online,

I am writing you about a little bit odd request. I am a student of marketing in my final year of studies. And as it happens, I have to write a master's thesis to prove that I can apply the knowledge that I've gained throughout the 5 years of college. There is one specific area of marketing that I would like to explore in the thesis and that's relationship marketing and the phenomenon of online communities. My vision is to apply the relationship framework on the videogame market. That wouldn't be a problem, as I have a lot of secondary data to explore and analyse, however I am required to carry out a primary research on my own. This research has to be focused, aimed at a specific online community. And when it comes to videogames, there's no game I always look more forward to, than Tomb Raider.

So why I am writing you all of this? I need to conduct a nethnographic research in order to collect necessary data. And due to my sheer love for Lara and the whole franchise, I think it would be symbolic to close one chapter of my life with a study centred on it.

The whole idea is to describe the community (what is it about? who are the members?), identify TRF as one of the three basic types of online communities (according to a certain characteristics of behaviour), analyse the forum platform (functions, sections, the way of communication), describe our affection for the franchise and developers (what makes us play TR? why do we love it? Core vs. Crystal dynamics), our relationship with Lara as a character (Who is Lara? What qualities should she have? What makes her special?) and also gather opinions about the way the games are distributed, priced and communicated in general.

TRF community is an ideal candidate. It's big, active, concerned about the game as well as about other topics, I am familiar with it (been a member since 2006 so I won't distract the natural flow of things), it has a long lasting history and the release of the Rise of the TR will surely spawn new fans and interesting posts. Plus there should be a description of the franchise as a whole, which I am personally looking forward to be writing about. Think about it, the whole history of the franchise since 1996, one of the biggest gaming icons! Combine it with a turbulent evolution of the video gaming industry and you ought to have an interesting read.

The whole research would go like this: 1) I introduce myself to the community, along with the goals of the thesis and the rules of the research (forums post with text, pictures, important info and maybe an introduction video) 2) I collect data that is spontaneously created by forum members 3) I ask a few questions on my own, create a pool, short questionnaire or write PM's to the individual members to ask them about details 4) Ask members for quotation permission 5) Analyse all the data 6) Post the results as well as the whole thesis on the forums.

I must stress that I am not doing this for any private subject, but for myself and for all of the people who love videogames and Tomb Raider as much as I do. I am not a native English speaker, however the thesis will be written in English and I will post the final thing on the forums for everybody to read (if they would like to). I still have time before I begin with the research because I must study the netnography method first.

Sheesh that's a long message. I hope I didn't overload you with information. I would be grateful if I could execute the research here on TRF. No matter how you decide, congratulations for running the forum for whopping 15 years. I couldn't believe my eyes. What an achievement. And it also reminds me that I am getting old... oh well, at least Lara's getting younger.

Best regards,

Martin Šugra,  
Czech TR fan.

Forward Reply

Figure 5-5: Permission request sent to TRF's administrator and owner Justin through the PM tool

The PM met with positive reception and was followed by another PM by author on 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, as is shown in Figure 5-6.. The figure includes the previous response from the forum's administrator as well.

Because of ongoing duties at his home university and the upcoming study semester in Vienna, author has postponed further communication until next year. Meanwhile, other parts of the thesis, including theoretical background to relationship marketing and Netnography were created. On 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016, author was ready to launch the research and contacted Justin again.

Several other mails were exchanged between the parties to plan the launch accordingly. Author expressed that changes to the research concept can still be made, but that the whole realization is crucial to a successful closure of his studies. Administrator replied very kindly to this request and suggested that a draft post should be created in a hidden forum section and then be reviewed by him. As author respected his authority from the very beginning and wanted to make the research as transparent as possible, there was no problem with negotiating the content. Author created the draft thread on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016, based on concept created in Adobe Photoshop CS6 two weeks earlier, as there were some minor delays in communication.




Private Message: Re: request

Recipients: tlr online

28-10-15, 08:25

Raziel66

Archaeologist



Join Date: Jan 2006  
Location: Czech Republic  
Posts: 1,091

Re: request

Hi tlr online,

I knew you wouldn't let me down. Making a separate thread for the research would be useful. I'll design it in a way so everyone will know what it's about. I think about the topic every day and I am writing down all of the things that I would like to achieve. In fact I have to know the targets before I begin. Once I finish studying the theory, I will set clear goals and make a draft of the thread and send it to you.

And about the data. The study will be uploaded to my university's online archive, however parts of it can be left out completely if needed (we can discuss the data in the final version together). Only the physical copy will contain the full text and that will be read by my opponent, who will review the thesis, and then by the examination commission, who always skim through it within ten minutes or so. Don't worry about this topic, we do this all the time. Our school is focused on business and many students work with actual data from companies all around the country, who are extremely sensitive to the data collection as it could be used by the competition. Besides most of the statistics will be done in bulk and 1 person = 1 anonymous line in the data sheet. I don't need any contact information, phone numbers, e-mails or real names. The only exception are the quotations (will be linked to the user's name), but again they cannot be made without the user's permission and can be deleted from the full text at any time. General info about the gender, age, occupation and nationality can be collected through the integrated TRF pool that is not only anonymous, but also considered as representative as only members can cast the vote and the return rate is usually high. If you could provide me with basic statistics of TRF like: number of users in total, share of active users (who logged in at least once in the last 6 months), average length of membership of the active users, it would be great (for the community description).

To ask people under age of 18 is considered unethical by the market research standards. Thank you for bringing this up. The question is, how can we prevent them from participation? Not every user has their age stated in their profile. I won't ask any minor directly and I can also write a warning in a **big red font** every time I post any question or pool. But the final result will be affected by how obedient the underage member are. I personally don't see any other way around.

The whole research would go like this: 1) I introduce myself to the community, along with the goals of the thesis and the rules of the research (forums post with text, pictures, important info and maybe an introduction video) 2) I collect data that is spontaneously created by forum members 3) I ask a few questions on my own, create a pool, short questionnaire or write PM's to the individual members to ask them about details 4) Ask members for quotation permission 5) Analyse all the data 6) Post the results as well as the whole thesis on the forums.

I must stress that I am not doing this for any private subject, but for myself and for all of the people who love videogames and Tomb Raider as much as I do, I am not a native English speaker, however the thesis will be written in English and I will post the final thing on the forums for everybody to read (if they would like to). I still have time before I begin with the research because I must study the netnography method first.

Sheesh that's a long message. I hope I didn't overload you with information. I would be grateful if I could execute the research here on TRF. No matter how you decide, congratulations for running the forum for whopping 15 years. I couldn't believe my eyes. What an achievement. And it also reminds me that I am getting old... oh well, at least Lara's getting younger.

Should you have any other questions don't hesitate to contact me. The whole study should be executed in a way that would ensure fair distribution of benefits, which is the essence of the relationship marketing. I will practice the theory and my analytical skills, and the members will get a nice summary about the franchise they love. That's the concept I am working with.

Best regards,

Martin Š.

Quote:

Originally Posted by tlr online

Hi Martin

Sorry for the delay in responding. I'm happy for you to proceed providing the below conditions are met:

1. Your project and goals must be made clear to all those who participate.
2. Those who participate must be informed how their data is being processed and how long it will be kept for.
3. Those who participate reserve the right to withdraw at any time.
4. No minors may participate or be contacted.

I think it also a good idea to create a single thread for your project where participants can stay updated and ask questions. I will not be able to participate on a personal level, but I am happy to provide technical information (platform/software info, server and infrastructure info... etc)

I wish you all the best of luck with your project, and I look forward to seeing the results.

Forward

Reply

Figure 5-6: Second PM to the forum's administrator, reacting to the positive response

98



**Quotations had dual character. Firstly, only two physical copies, viewed by approximately six academics** (the thesis' leader, opponent and four member committee), **would carry the full, raw data.** Author decided to collect and analyse everything relevant to the topic, as other approach would be slow, ineffective and would negatively impact the reliability of data.

**Secondly, for quotes, appearing in the research's conclusion,** author always asked for a **written consent.** In accordance to the guidelines of the method (Kozinets, 2015), interviews present an interaction and thus require informed agreement from the side of the interviewee. The permissions were gained **either through posts in the actual forum topic, or by the PM interface.** Unlike raw data, these quotations and content were **published in the electronic version of the thesis** and would be accessible by students and staff members.

In accordance with administrator's wish, **no minors (users under 18 years of age) were interrogated directly** and every personal message were planned to include **warning in red bold font.**

Due to the casual nature of the topic, **author decided to fully cite and credit** research participants **when possible.** Any taken quotations, fan made pictures, in-game screenshots or video-stills were linked to their creator. However, in the light of the method's guidelines (Kozinets, 2015), author always **considered the risk of the published artefact for the participant.** This was relevant mainly to the topics concerning sexual themes or any other intimate areas that may negatively affect the individual and/or his family, friends or colleagues, if published. The **second degree of cloaking** (Kozinets, 2015) was used in these situations and was comprised of **obfuscating user names and remixing the content.** All members were **directly contacted via PM should the author needed to use and cite their output and informed about the possible privacy breach.**

Author also stressed out the **possibility to reject quotation and also to back off during the research period, as requested by forum's administrator.**

#### **5.4.5 The site selection**

**Tomb Raider Forums fulfilled requirements** that Kozinets (2015) stated, in full. The research was concerned with **Tomb Raider** franchise which was the **central topic of the website.** The forum was well **updated and moderated** with **users who communicate** with

each other on a **daily** basis. The content included **text, images, videos and even user created content** like wallpapers, software tools and custom made levels. And on top of that, **author has been** a fan of the franchise since childhood and **part of the TRF group since 2006**. It was active, interactive, substantial, rich in form, and the connection to the topic provided the researcher with **introspective experience**.

#### **5.4.6 Inspection of Tomb Raider Forums: elements of socialization**

Analysis of the community provided leads for group's basic **demographic data**, the **topics** they liked to chat about, the **language** they used and also the **rules** they obeyed. Kozinets (2015) implies that using inappropriate language, whether it be too formal or informal, can grant the netnographer an outsider status. The lack of knowledge of group's background, such as their perception of reality formed in specific opinions and attitudes, can widen the gap even further.

Unlike steps 7 and 11, inspection was **focused more on online socialization aspects**. Following Kozinets' guidelines, author decided to target these specific **characteristics of TRF**:

- Basic site information,
- user agreement and rules,
- demographic data,
- language,
- jargon and abbreviation,
- additional communication tools,
- discussed topics,
- **Network structure (type),**
- **type of content shared (form),**
- strength of bonds (frequency, importance of information),
- patterns of relations,
- sub-groups,
- connections to other websites,
- important users,
- **Socialization experience (type),**
- rituals.

As part of the practical research, **findings** of inspection can be found **in chapter 6**.

### 5.4.7 Interaction: entry phase and techniques

Author of this thesis created an entry thread on TRF that consisted of a **textual introduction, graphical elements and a video**. Kozinets (2015) states that one should **identify him/herself**, communicate the research purpose and provide accessible description of the research focus and interests. The post was structured in accordance to those instructions and is was posted on TRF, as shown in Figure 5-7.



Figure 5-7: Snapshot of the introductory post dedicated to the research, posted on TRF

The **introduction** was written in a rather **informal** way, **void of unnecessary technical terms** and language. Friendly approach was taken instead and **author kindly asked for help** with his research project. The content of the **introductory post** is showcased in full with Figure 5-8.



# THE TOMB RAIDER RESEARCH



Picture by: Pictio-Crafts <http://pictio-crafts.com/learn/en/TOMB-RAIDER-SAGA-4267C87>



## I. Introduction

Hello there fellow TRF members! My name is Martin Šugra. I am an avid Tomb Raider fan as well as a student in his last semester of master's studies. I am majoring in marketing and business and would appreciate your help with this **video-game-focused research**. Together, we can unearth some of the secrets Lara and the series have left in each one of us.



## II. The archeology and artefacts

The goal of this research is to analyse the TRF community from the perspective of Relationship marketing theory and Netnography, while identifying stances towards video games in general.

Netnography: What is the social network structure of TRF? What is the level of socialization here? What topics are we talking about? How do we communicate? Where are we from? What about gender and age?

Relationship marketing: What brings us together, what is the link? Why do we love TR and Lara so much? **How does ideal Lara look like? What makes the games good?** Do we act like a brand community, subculture, or tribe? Do we show each other support? Is there a common enemy? Do we share some common rituals? Do we use tools to be creative?

Marketing: **What are our stances towards video game industry?** Price? Distribution? Product?



## III. Tools, guns, grapples and flares

To find all secrets about TR, Netnography and quantitative methods will be used. First, TRF will be inspected by a simple **read through and observation** to assess general information about the community, its form and the gamut of social activities.

Questions concerning our relationship with TR will require more in-depth analysis, which is done by going through relevant posts and **inspecting each sentence, word by word**. Should I fail to find a relevant thread, I will set up my own and try to spark a discussion in a certain topic. Then I will try to interpret your posts by **including my thoughts in them**. Should I find your post perplexing, I will kindly **ask you for your interpretation**. Should I find your quote essential, I will include it in the final results as a representation of TRF's mindscape.

The relationship and, especially, the marketing part will also require some quantitative methods. **Google forms** will be an ideal tool to identify basic forum statistics, summarize your stances and to transform your opinions into interesting results. All done with a basic and **anonymous questionnaire**. **Word cloud generator** will be great for explaining the overall mood of a single topic.

And finally, **I will write a diary** that will capture my feelings throughout the whole (n)ethnographic observation. Mainly because it is also an introspective research.





## IV. Museum and archivation

To use your artefacts, aka. to quote you, I will need your permission via PM. You can either: A) Tell me you feel OK to be quoted along with your nick, B) Tell me you feel OK to be quoted, but not directly. Then I will reformulate your post and give you a fake nick. C) Tell me you don't want to be quoted at all. **Quotations will have dual character.**

**Screenshots of posts, or their reformulations**, along with my thoughts, will be **included in a separate analysis**, which will be only present in two physical copies, both owned by me. The full work will be seen by my thesis' leader and opponent, who will both grade me. Then it will be showed to a four member committee for about 5-10 minutes. It will be a mix of your thoughts, my thoughts, with lots of scribbled notes.

The second form of **quotations** will be the ones **included in the final summary**, as quotes that summarise the opinion of TRF pretty well, or are significant for understanding the topic. These will be present in the digital form of the thesis and can be viewed by staff members and students of my school.

**Full copies will be kept in my possession** and the **partial, digital copy will be saved in an online archive at my school**: <https://dspace.vsb.cz/handle/10084/888>

**You can back off at any time** you like, unless the work has already been published.



## V. Your visa

I gave my honest word to Justin that **I won't directly interview any minors**. If you are under 18 years of age, please ignore my PMs or write me a negative response. As for the questionnaires, you can participate freely.



## VI. The treasure

I would like to share the loot with you, fellow archeologists. The **thesis' results will be posted here on TRF** once I am done with the research (September-August). You can read it and enlighten yourself with the findings.

Besides that, **I will reward 10 research participants with 10 EUR Steam vouchers issued on the 10th day of the 10th month of 2016**. The draw will be done with MS Excel and the random number function. Anyone who participates in any of the research topics will be included in the draw. I would even consider doing a live stream to let you know the results.



## VII. My passport

You can contact me by **replying to this very post** or **sending me a PM**.

Alternatively, you can send me an **e-mail**: [Martin.sugra@atlas.cz](mailto:Martin.sugra@atlas.cz)

Add me on **Facebook**: <https://www.facebook.com/martin.sugra.90>

Check my **LinkedIn** account: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/martin-%25C5%25A1ugra-308561104>

See the web of **my university**: <http://www.ekf.vsb.cz/en>

**Thank you for your time**  
**Let the adventure begin**

Coincidentally, the act of **marketing research** was somewhat **similar to archaeology**, which is the main profession of Tomb Raider's main heroine, Lara Croft. Author used this as a **metaphor to explain his intentions, means and expected outcomes**. Not only did the post explain research details, but it also **stood for ethical standards** of it. Information **how personal data will be processed**, stored and published was included in the post. As requested by the forum's administrator, author stressed out that no minors may be interviewed directly. And finally, netnographer **revealed himself with contact information, links to home university and personal social media accounts**. This was underlined by him being present in the introductory video.

Visually, the post was **designed in Adobe Photoshop CS6** to look appealing and to fit the visuals of TRF. **Forum's colour pallet was used** for graphical elements and text, crucial information was highlighted for better orientation. Author also picked from one of the fonts available in the forum's post editor and downloaded **Tomb Raider font** by Navin Adchariyavanich, which was available for free on **Dafont.com**, to make it more connected with TR franchise. (Adchariyavanich, 2016) Header was inspired by the work of Pedro-Croft, a **DeviantArt.com** artist who put all Lara Croft models in a singular collage. (Henrique, 2016). It proved to be a clever visual solution for individual bullet points and depicted the franchise as a whole, which was necessary since the community is somewhat split in their stances towards individual titles in the series. In the **background** was placed one of the iconic artefacts, the **Scion of Atlantis**, a **symbol of knowledge** that the research strives to gather.

**Performance** was also kept in mind when dealing with design. Author used recommended, fast image **hosting Imgur.com** to upload **compressed JPEGs** of graphical elements in the post. The visuals have been **squeezed to 217 kB** in terms of size and thus were not demanding of fast internet connection and were fine to view in mobile devices.



Secondly, author **created an 18:28 minutes long introductory video in Windows Movie Maker**. The video covered the same areas as the introductory post while being **more personal** and relying less on informational appeals. The video consisted of **footage of author speaking to the camera** and was **layered with explanatory pictures and short videos**. Structure of the video included these sub-points:

- 1) Mysterious introduction,
- 2) author's introduction, explanation of the act of master's thesis and research,
- 3) relational motives behind selecting Tomb Raider and TRF,
- 4) goals of the research,
- 5) requested input on the side of TRF members,
- 6) practical explanation of methodology,
- 7) outcomes and rewards for the community,
- 8) FAQ – more background information about the author and his motives, contact information,
- 9) Outro.

Every segment was introduced by a **slide designed in colour palette of TRF** and was accompanied by the iconic **“Aha...” sound effect** that plays whenever players discover secret in the classic TR games. Author found this sound to be fitting, as the effect is **short, mysterious, iconic**, and represents the **in-game act of unravelling a secret**, just as the research, it feels enlightening and explanatory.

Throughout the video, many in-game, **TR footage** and **FMV sequences** were shown. These served either as **metaphors to explain the research**, as **demonstrations** of aspects of **brand relationships**, or just for **comical purposes**. For example, Tomb Raider II footage corresponded with author's own “love at first sight” experience, FMV sequence of TRAoD praised the series' atmospheric soundtrack, in-game cut scene of Lara killing human being for the first time in the reboot showcased emotional appeal of the story, TRU video compared marketing research to archaeology, and one of Legend's cut scenes, re-imagined by author and re-dubbed by Google translator, warned about false research expectations by comparing it to ordering a Big Mac at KFC. Xzhibit and Grumpy cat **memes**, as part of the internet language, were used next to the **viral video** called “Go! Bwah”. Full storyboard of the video can be seen bellow (Figure 5-9) and **transcript** can be found in **Appendix 2**. Videos were **downloaded from YouTube** and author **credited their authors** with embedded **subtitles**, included during the editing process.

## INTRODUCTORY POST: STORYBOARD



"Hello everybody. My name is Martin and I am here to uncover one of the greatest mysteries Tomb Raider franchise has ever seen. And that's TRF"



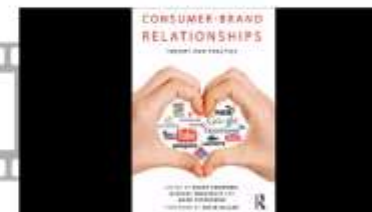
"And with the blessing of the penguin almighty, our administrator, let us commence." Avatar of the forum's administrator Justin, is shown in a heavenly backdrop, while the "holy hand grenade" sound effect from the videogame Worms, plays in the background.



Footage of Lara negotiating with one of the villains in TRL plays as author jokes about bribery as the second alternative to conducting own research.



Final scene from TRL, where Lara directs her team to share crucial information she has found about the myth of Avalon, serves as a metaphor to sharing important findings of a marketing research with the world.



Book covers of Fournier's Brand-Love Relationships and Kozinets' Netnography: Redefined revealed theoretical concepts of the thesis.



Viral video "Go! Bwah" helped author to explain his worries about the research's successful start. The short clip includes little girl landing on her face after commanding her dog to go rush forward. Symbolically, it represents prior faith in a successful start, followed by an inevitable crash with harsh reality.



In game cut scene of TRU plays as author tries to describe marketing research as a way of verifying/rejecting hypotheses. In the footage, Lara finds out that her father was right with his theories and that there's still a way to reach the mythical Avalon.



First minute of gameplay of TR2: The Lost Arlefact plays as a demonstration of author's first experience with the series, as the "love at first sight" phenomena.



Short clip taken from TR3 praises the series' logical puzzles and traps. Lara has to time her movements precisely to avoid deadly spinning blades.



Camera flies through TR4's Cleopatra's palaces level to picture the series' taste in beautiful locations and real cultures.



Intro FMV of TRAoD is played to appreciate the series' atmospheric soundtrack.



Lara's first kill in TR reboot showcases one of the series' many emotional moments.



Rapid sequence of Lara picking up various items throughout one of the levels of TR5 demonstrates the appeal of the game to people with the "collectors/completionism syndrome". Author introduces it as a "...slight OCD need to collect things". MAD TV's parody of Mariah Carey's Glitter soundtrack plays as the background music with lyrics stating: "I need it, I want it, I love it, I have it". It compares the obsessive need to have a movie award to the similar need of collecting every item and secret in the game. The breathy and hilariously lunatic voice of Debra Wilson makes it pretty comprehensible even to people who don't know the legendary TV show.



The grotesque "Technical difficulties, please stand by" TV screen and sound play as to showcase the players' brain facing meltdown during the quest for completion



One of the very first FMVs from TR1 depict Lara as an emancipated and "kickass" female characters. Lara makes a spectacular entrée as she descends from a cliff to kill a pack of rabid wolves with her dual pistols.





Mainly for comical purposes, Janice, one of the NPCs from TRAoD, is shown gunning her way through a pack of French policemen in the game's first level. Besides comedy, the footage shows modding skills of the TR fan base, as the game's files have to be tempered with in order to make Janice playable instead of Lara.



"Technical difficulties" screen is shown again, to remind the viewer that something does not sit right with the footage, as Janice is not originally meant to be played.



Short TV clip of the famous Kardashian sisters saying "Thank you" in a very robotic, if not terror inducing manner is played to motivate forum members to share their perception of Lara's character. Author immediately apologizes for this disgraceful example and continues.



"What makes the game good?... Is it the thrill of exploration?" asks author the audience. This is followed by a footage of Lara falling down into a lava pit and screaming as she faces her inevitable demise. Her raised and waving hands and the high pitched voice could be easily mistaken as a sign of unprecedented excitement, which was the idea behind this clip.



"What makes the game good?... Is it the freedom of movement?" asks author. Chariots of fire by Vangelis, a movie-tied track associated with running and freedom, plays and is suddenly interrupted with a cliché vinyl scratch sound effect as TR2 Lara locks her butler into a freezer. Croft Manor was a free-rom level in the original trilogy and in TRA.



Screenshots of random thread posts reveal how members already engage in discourse with topics relevant to the thesis.



Image with a random Likert scale and several pie charts picture what author means by quantitative data and its form.



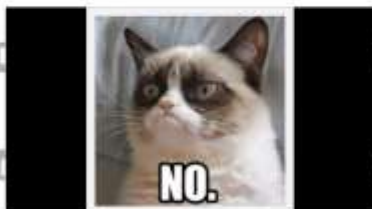
Netnographical discourse analysis is practically showcased in a selected post concerning one of the relevant topics.



Word cloud of the same thread demonstrates the output of quantification of topic's overall mood.



Blank Xzhibit meme is briefly placed on the screen to label the act of secondary cloaking as silly, since it involves creating nicknames for nicknames.



Grumpy cat meme is shown to signalize that author is aware that forum members can reject his quotation request.



Screenshot of DSpace, the online database where master theses of author's university are stored, is pictured to make the data storage clause more transparent.



Same is done with the official website of the university.



The face of TR1 Lara is shown for a split second along with the "No" sound effect, which plays in the original series when wrong combination of items is selected or used.



"And partially, I hate marketing too. Especially those stupid commercials that always pop up when....," says the author, but fails to finish, as commercial for the Saturn version of TR4 interrupts his speech.



Viral video of "Go! Bwah" is shown again, for the sake of comical effect of repetition.



"I don't want to cause any false expectations," claims the author in order to avoid misleading claims about the thesis and to encourage discussion. This is followed by a re-dubbed, in-game cut scene from TRL in which Lara originally yells: "Where is my mother?" while firing her pistols ferociously. To be replied by person responsible for her disappearance "Avalon!". Instead, author created a new text and transformed it into a voice with Google translator. The re-imagined scene read: "Where is my Big Mac?" to be replied with "But this is KFC." This is as random as it is fitting to the internet phenomena of videos of enraged fast food customers.



"And may the Janice be with you," says author as he makes a J letter gesture with his hands. Besides being a Star Wars reference, it implies that Janice, as an unforgettable NPC from TRAoD, possessed some supernatural powers that can be utilized by chosen ones.



This fluently transfers to the classic, overused, grotesque song Spanish flea by Herp Alpert and continues with a footage of Janice sliding down a roof and falling to her death in the modded version of TRAoD.



Final screen reads "THE END... seriously," which reacts to the extensive length of the video.

Since the TRF represents the biggest TR community to date and allows interaction in many shapes and forms, **no separate website was created for the research**. Instead, **simple forum threads like the introductory post were designed, letting the participants to react and comment**. Secondary thread was created when collecting big data and included a link to the RM questionnaire and information concerning the requirements, purpose and desired outcomes. The second TRF post can be seen in Figure 5-10.

## How does ideal Lara Croft look like?



Released by: Proton-Entity <https://proton-entity.com/news/70998-66888-6688-428171237>

### I. What I did



I went through every box-art, artwork, cut-scene and FMV of each, main TR title.  
(minus Chronicles & first reboot)

8 hours of video footage in total; reviewed second by second, multiple times.

I analyzed Lara's behaviour and identified her personality traits & skills.

### II. The ultimate poll

I've seen so many discussions about Lara Croft and her persona, so many interesting views and ideas. Now it's time to combine them together and **define our heroine from top to bottom**.

**Fill in an anonymous questionnaire** I created from **combining all Laras together**.  
**It's easy, but remember, this is about your ideal Lara and every question should be answered with this in mind.**

↓ ↓

**Link to the questionnaire:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1O7A...FeZjI/viewform>

↑ ↑



### III. Results ?

I will statistically process all answers and create:  
"The ideal Lara Croft".

I created a comparison sheet so **we will also know which Lara comes closest to the ideal!** Is it AoD Lara? TR II Lara? Or, maybe, reboot Lara?



I will also share **fun facts and summary for each Lara**, since I marked prominent traits in each TR game. Which Lara is the biggest gangster? Which Lara would survive in a prison fight? Which one would take a place next to Mother Teresa? Which one is the queen of humour? You'll soon find out!

### IV. How many people ?

We **need at least 100 members to fill in the questionnaire** for results to be representative of TRF's general opinion about Lara.

It is **very important to me**, because if I don't manage to gather up 100 responses, I won't be able to finish the thesis, and my studies.

**I would be very grateful for your participation.** Don't forget that **you can win one of the 10 EURO Steam vouchers. Just leave me a post here so I can add you to the draw.**

### V. More info about TRF research

More information about my research of TRF can be found in the following thread:

<http://www.tombraiderforums.com/showthread.php?t=214924>

Figure 5-10: Forum post number 2, explaining the RM questionnaire and requesting TRF's participation

Author **altered his signature** as well as his **profile picture** and user credentials to transparently signalize his intentions. On top of that, he provided **link to his e-mail, personal Facebook account and LinkedIn account**, as well as **links to home school and the database where the thesis will be stored (as seen in picture xy)**. Author did not find it necessary to change his username, since the account had history of participation with other forum members (signalized by the number of posts) and Raziell66 still remains one of author's favourite videogame characters. Besides, nickname was a common practice on TRF and the introductory post made author's identity clear enough.



Figure 5-11: Author's personal profile on TRF, showing avatar, nick and signature among others

The **core techniques of the interaction** on TRF included:

- 1) **Observation** of the community,
- 2) active **participation** in threads of interests in a form of text messages, images (screenshots, Memes, photos, gifs, Vines), symbols (icons, smileys), YouTube videos and links to other websites and social media,
- 3) **interviews** via the **PM** forum tool,
- 4) and further **interview/interaction** through **e-mail** and the personal **Facebook** profile.

Ethical rules of the research, including the acquisition of permission from the gatekeeper, individual agreements on using users content and the issue of user's privacy protection, were described in phase three (ethics). The collection of data followed and **author launched the project on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016**.

#### **5.4.8 Immersion: content analysis**

Kozinets' guidelines were followed by the author and applied on TRF. First step consisted of the research question selection, followed by **skimming through the forums' relevant** sections and individual **threads**. Each topic was analysed in terms of **general atmosphere**, either by a simple **read-through**.

**Specific quotations and opinions** were collected and expanded with **interactive discussions** with forum members. The content, in its wide variety of forms, was then **compiled** by the author into a **comprehensible whole** and in the final phase, **reflexed upon** (field notes were created). Immersion is **part of the chapter 6**.

#### **5.4.9 Data capture: software tools**

A series of tools were used to capture and process the selected data. Both small data and big data were collected and analysed. Author of this thesis captured field notes **from the moment of the project's introduction** on the TRF, **from 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016 to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2016**. They were written in a simple form of a MS-Word document and included **observational notes** as well as **self-reflective comments**.

On a level of **small data analysis** a simple **copy-paste** mechanic was used to import the textual data into the **Microsoft Word editor** for further deconstruction and compilation. Images were saved and imported to the thesis in a similar manner with the "**save as**" function available



in any **web browser**. Native to the Windows platform since its 7<sup>th</sup> iteration, Snipping tool was used for **screen capture** of videos, visually complex sites or branching discussions.

**Big data analysis** required a different set of tools to be used. **Google Forms** was utilized to collect aggregate, quantitative data about the community through the RM questionnaire. **IBM SPSS Statistics 21** and **Microsoft Excell** were used to analyse the data and to generate associated tables and figures. The visualization of keywords was done either with **Worditout.net** online word cloud generator or with **Adobe Photoshop CS6**.

**Adobe Photoshop CS6** was also used to **design all three research posts and to write the included text**. Photoshop was also very useful when it came to the overall design of the thesis and for the transformation of quantitative data into **infographics**.

**Imgur.com** served as a **cloud storage for any pictures** used for research threads. The service was recommended by forum members and was not banned, unlike some other picture sharing websites that have caused problems in the past.

For the introductory post, author used **Windows Movie Maker to capture, cut and edit video**. Online, free service **ClipConverter.cc** served as a **downloader for all extra YouTube videos and audio footage** that were incorporated in the work. **Audacity** was a freeware software used for sole audio capture, should it be hosted outside YouTube. And finally, **YouTube** was chosen as a **hosting for the video**, which author made unlisted and only shared the link with forum members.

#### **5.4.10 Interpretation: practical application of the method**

The **analysis of TRF** was done in **electronic**, or as Kozinets (2015) calls it “cyborgian” fashion:

- 1) The **manual analysis** is subjective and requires the author to highlight certain parts of the communication and reflect on them. This was done by **copying the TRF posts in a textual or screenshot form into the thesis (in MS Word) and reflecting on their contents textually and visually**, while simultaneously respecting the ethical standards set for this research. This represents the small data analysis,
- 2) **automated analysis** was done via **IBM SPSS 21** and **Microsoft Excell** on large blocks of data, helping to aggregate opinions gathered about Lara Croft’s persona with the RM

questionnaire. It was also used when generating word clouds with the **Worditout.net** tool.

#### **5.4.11 Iteration: changes**

1. Stumbling upon a great amount of data to work with, it was **unnecessary** for author **to set separate threads or contact members directly**. TRF **members** were **discussing** relevant topics **on their own** and author used this content to execute the netnography. It was clear enough to be **comprehensible** without asking for clarification,
2. **word clouds** were **not used** since the content was scattered around many threads and opinions varied greatly. The **content** was **not so excessive** for author not to **describe** it **manually**, it was also more effective.

## 6 Online Community Research

The community research represents steps number 5, 7, 11 and 12 in Kozinets' framework:

**5. Inspection of Tomb Raider Forums: elements of socialization,**

**7. Immersion: content analysis,**

**11. Instantiation: results of research,**

**12. Integration: Conclusion.**

Both **input and output of research are shown** and include all data that was collected, decrypted and analysed by author. As such, it includes **screenshots** and **quotes** made **by TRF members**, enhanced with **author's comments**, author's own **diary** and **visual representations of final results**. These were **confronted with RM theory** at the **end** of this, **sixth chapter** and in **chapter seven**. The **research began on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2016** and ended on **15<sup>th</sup> July 2016**.

### 6.1 Inspection of Tomb Raider Forums: elements of socialization

This chapter is focused mainly on online socialization aspect of TRF.

#### 6.1.1 What are the basic characteristics of TRF (form, demography, language)

**Tombraiderforums.com** (further referred to as TRF) was founded in June 2000 by its administrator tlr online, who was also known by the name Justin. Since its inception, TRF had attracted **56 709 members** and spawned **205 461 threads** with **7 520 385 individual posts**. (Tombraiderforums, 2016) By the time these lines were written, **347 users** were **browsing** the forum, from which **42 were registered members**.

The forum had been based on the widely used **vBulletin community software package** and, as a **standard forum format**, was easily comprehensible and intuitive to use. The idea of a forum is to create a platform that would allow users to **discuss** certain **topics in an orderly manner**. Because of that, TRF consisted of **6 main forums**, **27 sub-forums** and the aforementioned **205 461 threads** and **7 520 385 individual posts**. Once registered, users could read existing discussions, sorted by their forum and sub-forums affiliation, and contribute with their own posts (i.e. a name for a singular forum answer).

Unlike a regular chat however, the discussion was more **moderated** (by selected members), permanent in a sense that users' **posts** were **archived**, and also more **personal**, since every posting member was required to create an **account**. This three specifics had secured that posts were more **accountable** and discussion more **sophisticated** and **well-mannered** as a result. Forum format had also allowed the use of basic html language so users could post not only **text**, but also **format it** graphically, post **images**, **videos** and even suggest a **poll**.

From a forum poll that was created in October 2015, and in which 175 forum members casted a vote, majority of the population were **males** of in the **age** category from **20 to 40**. The poll revealed that about **16%** of the user base were **female**, as shown in Figure 6-1.



Figure 6-1: Results of TRF's sex & age poll from 2015  
Source: (Tombrailerforums, 2015)

More extensive poll had been conducted in August 2010 and indicated that female population was approximately around 20 %. (Figure 6-2) Either way, the vast majority of users were male. As sexuality seemed to be a **topic closely connected to the entire franchise** and Lara's persona, **sexual orientation** was the main focus of the aforementioned poll. **37.85 %** of **members** identified themselves as **non-straight males**, taking the biggest share of TRF's user base, and were closely followed by **straight males** who held **32.74 %**, and **straight females** with **17.65 %**. Given the results, it can be spotted that **sexual minorities** are not "minor" on TRF by any means and that they have **no problems to co-exist** with straight population, especially males.

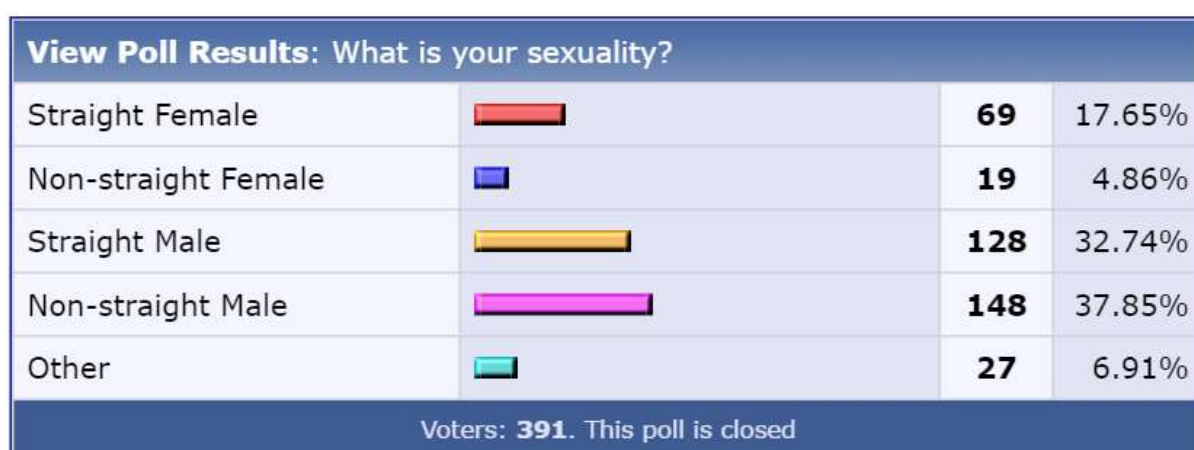


Figure 6-2: Results of TRF's sexuality poll from 2010  
Source: (Tombrailerforums, 2010)

Concerning the geographical spread of forum members, **60 %** of the users were from **Europe**, **25.73 %** from **North America**. Results from the pool, which had been conducted in 2012, can be seen in Figure 6-3.



Figure 6-3: Results of TRF's geographical spread from 2012  
Source: (Tombrailerforums, 2012)

**Language** of the forum, as of many other gaming forums and video games themselves, was set to **English**. Four additional languages, **German, Spanish, French** and **Portuguese**, could be used freely in the relevant sub-forum of the **International forum**. Although the language skills can vary, it can be said that **posts were well written** and **far from** using “**broken**” **English**. For example Matie from Hungary contributed to “How are you feeling (and why)?” thread in General chat forum with a post written in a nice English. (Figure 6-4)

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-4: A showcase of a well written post in English by a non-native speaker

As visible from Matie's post, the language was **rather informal**, but still cultivated. Usage of **explicit language** was **not technically possible**, since the vBulletin board had an **integrated censorship system**, as demonstrated with Figure 6-5. Zebra's post was extracted from “Which Tomb Raider has the best story line?” thread that included 79 posts, from which only 3 posts included **explicit language** (3,7%). Author had tested another thread, “Everything you need to get TRAOD Running on your PC PERFECTLY !”, and the result was 0 rude posts out of 117 posts in total (0%). Third thread, “Create A Story“, included 140 polite posts (0%). Overall, TRF's **members were very polite**.

Figure 6-5: Automatic censorship of the vBulletin platform

Users utilized **internet slang** as well. Author had gone through the “Open Chat XVII” thread and located 9 specific words and acronyms within 560 posts. The list had been later expanded with further slang terms as the research went on and can be seen in Figure 6-6:

Figure 6-6: Internet acronyms on TRF

<i>Internet slang</i>	<b>Translation</b>
<i>OMG</i>	Oh my god!
<i>Lol</i>	Laughing out loud
<i>IDK</i>	I don't know
<i>Yaaas!</i>	Expression for excitement
<i>tbh</i>	To be honest
<i>lmao</i>	Laughing my ass off
<i>gtfo</i>	Get the fuck out
<i>ASAP</i>	As soon as possible
<i>imo</i>	In my opinion
<i>OP</i>	Original poster
<i>SJW</i>	Social justice warrior
<i>WTF</i>	What the fuck
<i>IKR</i>	I know, right
<i>ATM</i>	At the moment
<i>Bc</i>	Because
<i>Jk</i>	Joking

Fortunately, these were placed next to more comprehensible text and, as such, **no prior knowledge of TRF's internet slang was really needed to understand the content.** The expressions were also **used only occasionally.**



What was used **frequently** however, were TR specific **abbreviations**, as seen in Figure 6-7:

Figure 6-7: TR-franchise specific abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<b>Long term</b>
<i>Chronicles</i>	Tomb Raider: Chronicles
<i>GO</i>	Tomb Raider GO
<i>GoL</i>	Lara Croft: The guardian of light
<i>LAU</i>	The Legend, Anniversary and Underworld trilogy of Tomb Raider games
<i>Osiris; Temple of Osiris</i>	Lara Croft: The temple of Osiris
<i>Reboot</i>	Either referring to Tomb Raider (2013) or its combination with Rise of the Tomb Raider
<i>Rise; RotTR</i>	Rise of the Tomb Raider
<i>TLR; The Last Revelation;</i>	Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation
<i>TR1; TR I / TR2; TR II / TR3;</i>	Tomb Raider 1/ Tomb Raider 2/ Tomb Raider 3/ Tomb
<i>TR III/ TR4; TR IV/ TR5; TR V/ TR6;</i>	Raider: The Last Revelation/ Tomb Raider Chronicles/ Tomb
<i>TR VI/ TR7</i>	Raider: The Angel of Darkness/ Tomb Raider: Legend
<i>TR2013; TR (2013)</i>	Tomb Raider (2013)
<i>TRA; TR A</i>	Tomb Raider Anniversary
<i>TRAOD; TRAoD; AOD; AoD;</i>	Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness
<i>TRL; Legend</i>	Tomb Raider Legend
<i>TRU; Underworld</i>	Tomb Raider Underworld

### 6.1.2 What content, and in which form is shared among its users?

To express themselves, members used variety of tools and artefacts. Besides the **basic text**, **smiley icons** and custom **text based smileys** were the most common form of communication. In a thread concerning similarity of Lara Croft to Kylie Jenner, members used smileys to express their confusion, laughter, and contemplation, as seen in Figure 6-8.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-8: Smiley icons as a form of communication

**Text based smiley** can be seen in post from Figure 6-10 that was lifted from thread concerning “Asian Pop Music!!!” It was a probable spot for a text smiley usage however, since anime-style expressions can be simulated with symbols. These are called **emoji**. **Two examples are part of Figure 6-9:**

^\_^ = basic smile, (°□°) 丿 ㄣ ㄣ = flipping the table, expression of anger

Figure 6-9: Two emoji examples

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-10: YouTube video as one of forms of shared content on TRF

As also hinted by Figure 6-10, **audio-visual material** was another form of communication. Embedded directly in posts, members could **share and play YouTube videos** without leaving TRF's ecosystem. These video posts could stand for basic act of **entertainment** content sharing, or as a mean to **express a thought without using words**.

Close to videos are definitely **gifs**, but these were not used as frequently, because of their **automatic streaming, unlike the on-demand video format**, and the **bandwidth strain** they presented for users. It was stated in the forum rules that any **gifs above 500KB** of size were **prohibited** and would be **removed by administrator** if spotted. Members also held back from quoting posts with such animations, which made the **forum more readable and well-arranged**. Rules concerning image use were part of “**Things you should know when posting on the forum**“ thread in the **General chat forum** and read as follows: (Tombrailerforums, 2011)

*“All images are to meet both size restrictions, 1024x768 pixels and 500 KB. Images larger than 1024x768 pixels and 500 kb should be posted as a link using the button or as a thumbnail rather than embedding them in the thread. If you are posting a lot of images, or quoting a post with images they should also be converted into links. This is out of courtesy to other members so that the forum layout is not distorted by large images, and so that the thread does not take a very long time to load. For image showcase threads, this rule can be relaxed but it is still advisable to post thumbnails for very large images rather than embedding them.”*

**TRF members seemed to respect these rules** and even reminded each other if breached. It is demonstrated with Figure 6 -11 that user MegaGamer reminded user Zebra to remove an oversized gif before administrator would notice. Coincidentally enough, in one of the threads author had set up.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-11: Example of how users remind each other to follow forum rules

The last, but not least, form of communication were **pictures**. These ranged from random **funny and beautiful images** in the dedicated “**Pic of the day**” thread, across **memes** that helped users to express themselves with **standardized/ well-known personas and quotes**. In the aforementioned thread about Kylie Jenner, user Hyper Crazy used Lara Croft meme to express his opinion in a way that was **understandable in**

a **split second** because of its **simplicity**. (Figure 6-12) Majority of users knew Lara and one of her iconic lines: “No”. It represented an **effective** way of **sending** the **idea** and **emotions** across.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-12: Memes as form of communication on TRF

**Pictures** were used not only as a mean for spectacular and comedy, but also as a **tool for networked individualism & support**. Users could post **snapshots of “their reality”**, for example to show **their looks**, **latest purchase**, or **problem** they were currently encountering. In a thread dedicated to **technical support** for AoD, Jorje Croft posted an error message from her game, asking for help. Since **other users could see the exact same screen** as the troubled individual, the probability of helpful response was heightened. It is true that **pictures are worth a thousand words**, since their **interpretation is left on the individual’s perception**.

6.1.3 What are the discussed topics?

The forum’s structure is depicted in Figure 6-13. Each of the **six, main forums** included at least one sub-forum, there were **27 sub-forums** in total, **16 if TR-title-specific sub-forums are seen as one entity**. These sub-forums included **additional, sub-sub-forums, 10** to be specific.

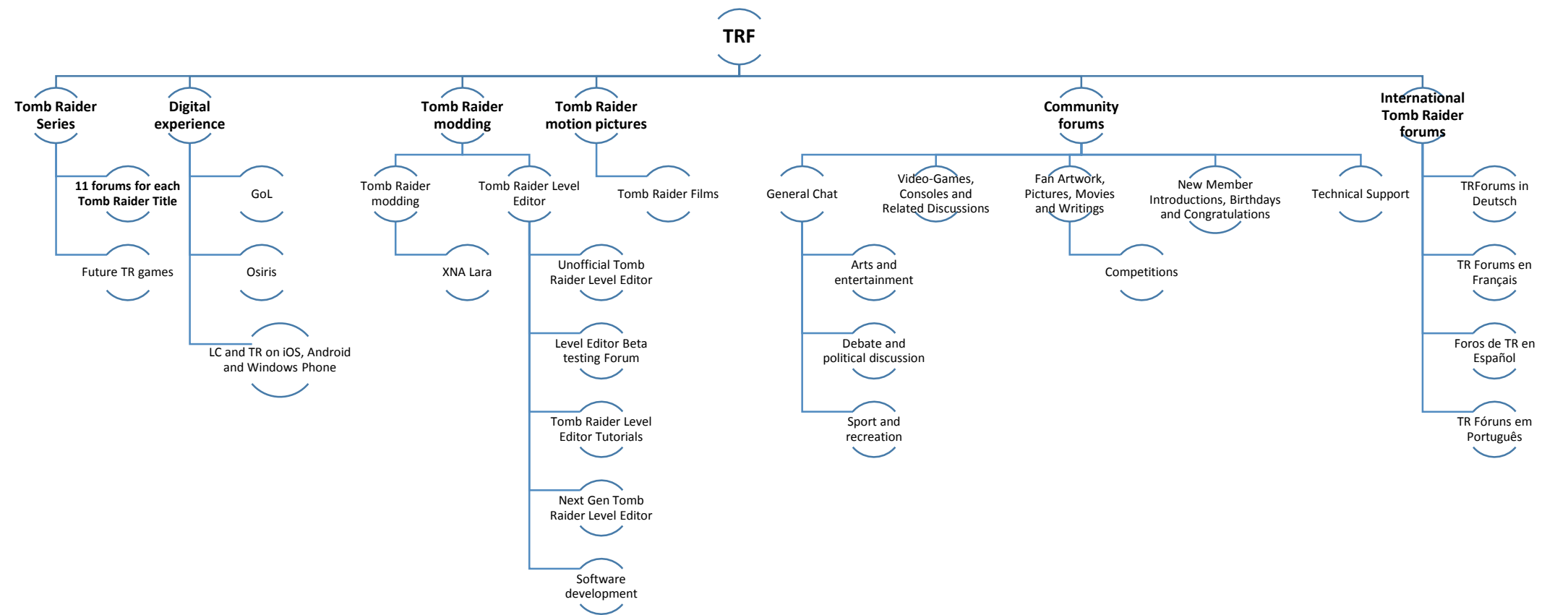


Figure 6-13: Forum’s structure with main forums and sub-forums

From the hierarchical diagram, **main topics** of discussion can be identified (see Figure 6-14):

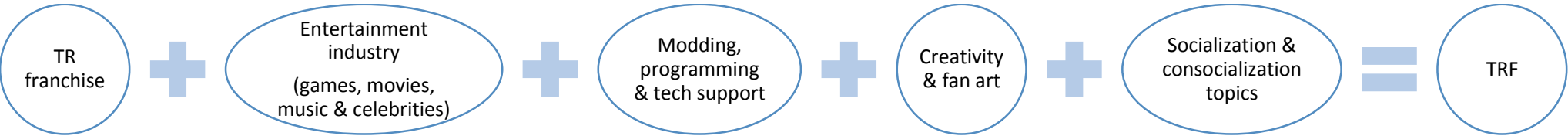


Figure 6-14: Generalization of discussed topics on TRF

#### 6.1.4 What is the network structure (model) of the forum?

As a discussion forum, TRF didn't rely on a singular source of information, like the audience network model, neither did it serve as a platform for customer support. Topical cluster network model would be in stark contrast with TRF's high interactivity level and even though polarized opinions about various Lara Croft iterations and games existed, neither of them had created a visible crevice in the network structure. It is clear that the only fitting model, as defined by Kozinets (2015), could be found in the **Social connections** category.

To provide evidence, author identified the following specifics of Social connections models on TRF:

- Members communicated about a **topic** that had as **significant meaning to them: Tomb Raider & Lara Croft**. Users were very engaged in the topic and projected **brand love** in all its shapes and forms,
- the group was composed of **people who knew each other** well through interactions in off-topic threads, through personal messages, users' message walls & interaction across the whole board. Users shared snapshots of their reality by posting pictures of themselves, even audio-visual material, next to revealing their personal lives through individual posts,
- TRF had been **open to new members** since its inception 16 years ago,
- the forum was **connected to other groups**, who share the same interest. For example one of the members offered to post author's questionnaire on Japanese and German Tomb Raider forums if needed,
- TRF had **hierarchy of moderators** who were watching over content created by members and judged its compatibility with forum rules. Some members had **status of a golden member** which indicated that they had contributed financially to the expenses connected with running the forum,
- community engaged in **shared projects**, such as game **modifications**, **level creation tools** and **rendering programme**.

Although many sub-forums and topics were offered on TRF, the **network was very tight** and **interwoven**. Users could temporarily gather around a specific activity, such as meme competition or author's questionnaire, but they had never dispersed after such act, unlike consumer tribes in the Interest group alliance network. On the other hand, **Tight social network model fitted perfectly**:

- **TRF fit the community concept** in all aspects. Members **were interacting frequently** and **effortlessly** about **similar topics**, responding continuously to each other by **quoting other users' posts**,
- newcomers got **rarely isolated** and, in fact, could post in the New member introductions, birthdays and congratulations sub-forum. Same applied to members who had already been part of the forum for some time. Given the fact that some threads were created directly because of the feeling of isolation in the "real world", TRF ticked all the necessary boxes of an inviting atmosphere,

- forum **rules** and **format ensured** that **responses** are **coherent** and logically ordered,
- participants **shared personal information**, showcased **technical** and **emotional support**. The first could be seen in the technical support forum and in individual threads about modding and patching. The latter often materialized in General chat sub-forum, where members shared their **feelings**, thoughts and personal **issues**. Sometimes, these issues were of serious character and crossed level of simple consociality.

### 6.1.5 What type of socialization experience does TRF provide?

Given the size and structure of TRF, **more than one socialization experience** type, as defined by Kozinets (2015), was provided across its many sub-forums and threads:

- 1) **Social sharing expressions**: TRF members were centred on particular interest & activity. **News about TR and Lara** were shared on the forum along **photos** and **videos**. Information about upcoming titles and even movies were swiftly **posted** and immediately **discussed** among members. The content, such as early screenshots and story leaks were **decomposed** frame by frame, pixel by pixel, word by word. This would go to **past as well**, with newly discovered **game easter eggs**, bugs, **magazine scans**, **unseen interviews** and so on. One example can be seen in Figure 6-15,

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-15: Thread dedicated to TR related magazine scans, presenting the social sharing expressions type of socialization

- 2) **organizational social enterprises**: modding threads and those focused on **level editing** had the potential to end up in a wholly **functional product**. Project focused on **remastering** and **patching AoD**, fully **reworked TR II in Unreal engine** or **XNA Lara 3D rendering tool** were handled professionally. Dusan, author of XNA Lara, wrote a program that would allow forum members to render scenes with character models from TRU. The post included detailed description of the program and list of continuous updates to the program, just as it would be handled in an official release log of any other software. Based on the critical reception, XNA Lara had been improved far beyond its original form. Excerpt from Dusan's post can be seen in Figure 6-16,

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-16: Dusan's XNA Lara 3D posing programme, an example of entrepreneurial social experience on TRF

- 3) **hyving social experiences**: was also possible due to the forum's discussion format and message tools. Open chat was a place of **random**, usually **non-related threads** that anybody could participate in, such as Picture of the day thread, The person below you forum game or a simple Open chat. . Most importantly,



these threads provided the **best tool for relationship creation**. While sharing old magazine scans or reviewing a game modification can be equally engaging, users seem to **share** their **problems**. Threads like: An apology (with video); For those of you who have quit smoking...; or Gay ☹, had the **emotional rawness** and **intensity** needed to transform the discussion **from consocial to social level**. For **community purposes**, the well labelled “Community Forums” were **essential**. Besides open discussion, the possibility to post on individual **member’s message wall** (as seen in Figure 6-17) or to send a secret **PM message** deepened the hyving usage of forum even further.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-17: Author’s personal message wall provided him with further information about both Lukass and lance6439. Lukass shared his nationality with author (Czech Republic) and lance6439 posted his interest in Czech language and his current language learning whereabouts.

### 6.1.6 How does networked individualism materialize on the forum?

As in many online services and platforms, users were allowed to **personalize their account**. This included:

- Avatar picture,
- signature,
- about me section with:
  - biography,
  - location,
  - interests,
  - occupation,
  - and gender.

Examples of avatars are depicted in Figure 6-17. As visible, users could pick **avatar** which was **related** to their favourite **anime, TV shows, movies, musicians, video games** or **celebrities**. Showcase of one’s **creations** (such as **drawing** of Lara) was also possible through the medium of avatar. Some users simply plastered a **photograph of themselves** to accompany all their posts, or a **regular photo** of anything else, a specific **symbol** or even an **abstract art**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-18: Showcase of avatars used on TRF

Not only avatar, but also the **location** and signature were visible when posting on TRF. In case of tomee and Shakira Croft, the location referred probably to their **homeland** (Hungary and Switzerland), but in case of laracroft1997 Hall of Seasons is one of the levels in TR AoD. The location field **can be fictional** and **project affiliation to specific cultural artefact**, for example a book, video game, movie or music. Some selected and amusing locations included:

- „Somewhere I guess,“ WolfRaider,
- „Milky Way,“ TR-Freak,
- „Behind you...,“ Enzimix,
- „The most swankified place in town,“ Daring Do,
- „Slumped in front of my PC,“ Sir Launcelot,
- „The land of pizza, pasta and Marco Bartoli,“ Hazelphoenix.

It is clear that the **location tool** had been **hijacked** to include **funny quotes, opinions, emotions** and even **philosophical thoughts**. The **real tool for one's philosophy** and **mottos** was the **signature** field. Just like the previous three profile aspects, signature was **showed underneath user's post**. Signatures were very similar to location field when it came to content, but could encapsulate more text, for example:

- „Core era is the best and reboot era isn't as bad as LAU era,“ peeves,
- „Single, Gay, Cool,“ Lyle Croft,
- „Have you tried turning it off an on again?“ Shirley Mason,
- „Even miracles take a little time,“ ThatSassyKid,
- „Cast from darkness and formed of night fears, the horror approaches,“ Caesum.

From peeves's and Lyle Croft's signatures, it is clear that **signatures, locations** and **avatars** can have a **social status function**, as **group membership** can be easily **projected** with them.

Besides account personalization, **threads users posted in** could have been seen as **way of networked individualism**. 10 years after joining the forum and engaging in tech-related issues, author had spotted that member EscondeR was still being present to help with any computer related issues, as seen in Figure 6-19. As far as author's research had reached, EscondeR was most prominent in the Technical Support forum. **For TRF community, EscondeR is a computer specialist**. Author dares to say that in real life, EscondeR's scope of interests would definitely exceed the IT field, but on TRF, he stands for tech support.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-19: Member EscondeR, networked as a tech-specialist individual

Less prominent, but equally fitting, example would be user ChingKong. Although being active in many topics, ChingKong's positioning included the keyword "art". Setting up his/her very own thread in the Fan Artwork, Pictures, Movies and Writings forum, **ChingKong presented him/herself as an artist**, posting (impressive) sketches and paintings for other users to see. Short stalking session had revealed that ChingKong also posted in the "General Artists' Thread"; "3d render inspired by TR4"; "GOOD Tutorials for digital painting?"; and in "Fan Art Competition: Sisters of Artemis" threads. Speculatively, ChingKong's **avatar** was also an **original piece of art**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-20: User ChingKong positioned him/herself as an artist by participating in art-related topics

It is clear that it was **possible to create a networked version of self on TRF**, whether it would be **via customization tools, posted content or focus on specific topics**.

### 6.1.7 Is there a connection to other social media and groups?

TRF had always been a very clean web page. The **only external link** that was placed on the landing page was a small **banner, with non-invasive advertisement**. Other than that, there were no links to other social media. However, an **adjacent web existed, TombRaiderChronicles.com (TRC)**. Unlike TRF, the web included a direct link to TRF in its main navigation menu (as seen in Figure 6-21), labelling it simply as "Forums". Based on that information, any visitor would connect TRC with TRF.

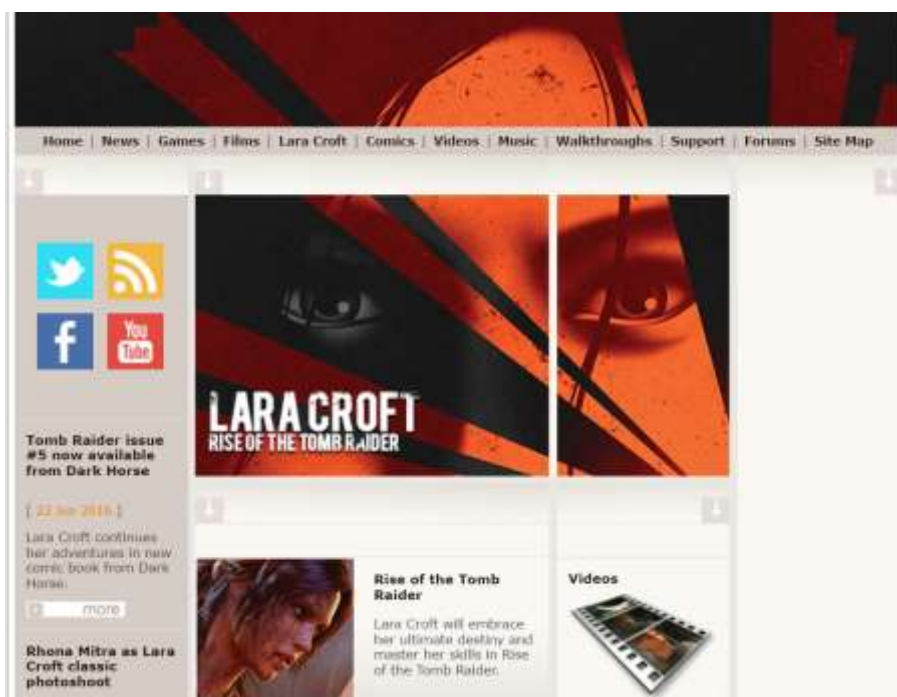
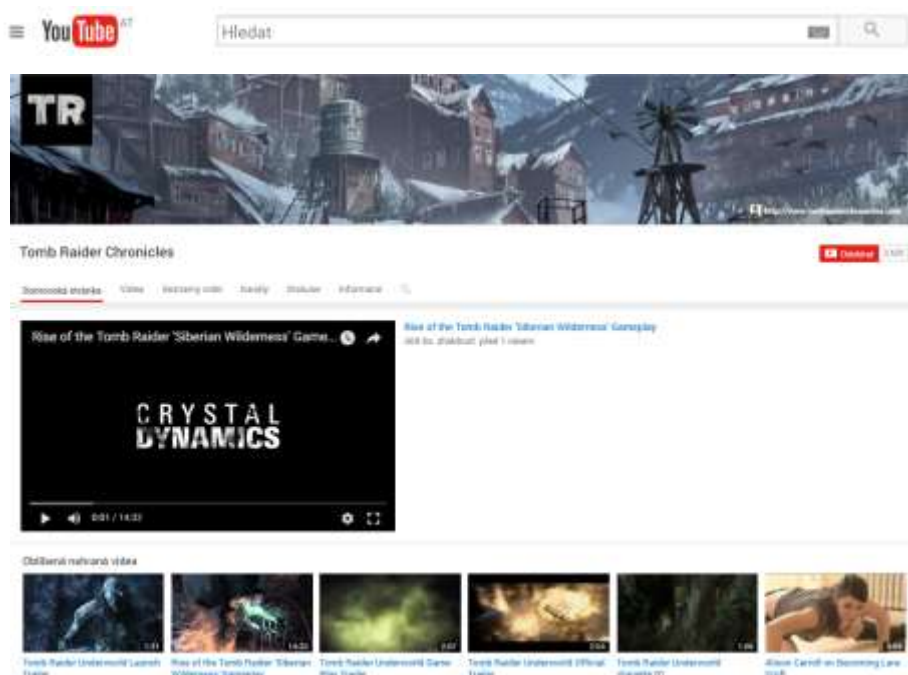


Figure 6-21: TombRaiderChronicles.com, an extensive encyclopaedia for TR franchise  
Source: (Tombraiderchronicles, 2016)

As the name suggests, **TRC** served as an **encyclopaedia and archive** for the series. Each title, no matter the platform, had microsite dedicated to it. There, title-related goodies could be found, such as screenshots, wallpapers, artwork, biographies, official press releases, renders, system requirements, trailers, cheat codes, walkthroughs, patches & updates, soundtracks and many more. **Unlike** a classic **Wikipedia**, TRC seemed more **structured**, filled with **content of great variety**; of **practical use** and, mainly; of high **quality**. The web was **simplistic**, yet very **thorough and informative**, lacking emotional bias and **focusing on things rational** and **credible** instead. What a striking similarity to Lara and the act of archaeology itself, since visitors could dig through **20 years' worth of content**.



**Figure 6-22: YouTube channel connected to TRC and thus TRF**  
*Source: (YouTube, 2016)*

TRC web was linked to three social media sites: **YouTube**, **Facebook** and **Twitter**. YouTube channel of Tomb Raider Chronicles included **trailers**, **advertisements**, **gameplay** videos, **interviews** and even an **unboxing** video. The channel was not redundant either and, for example, the launch trailer for TRU had accumulated nearly 900,000 views, next to 400,000 views of RotTR gameplay video. It was a great addition to the main TRC site, even if the number of subscribers was not high. Screenshot can be seen in Figure 6-22.

Besides YouTube, **Twitter** (@tombradertweet) and **Facebook** (@playtombrader) sites were focused on hot news about the franchise. Unlike TRC, these social media had **more minor reports**, such as info about current **Steam sale**, notice about new **TR comic book issue**, or **award nominations** for the franchise. Screen cap of TRC's Twitter account can be seen in Figure 6-23.

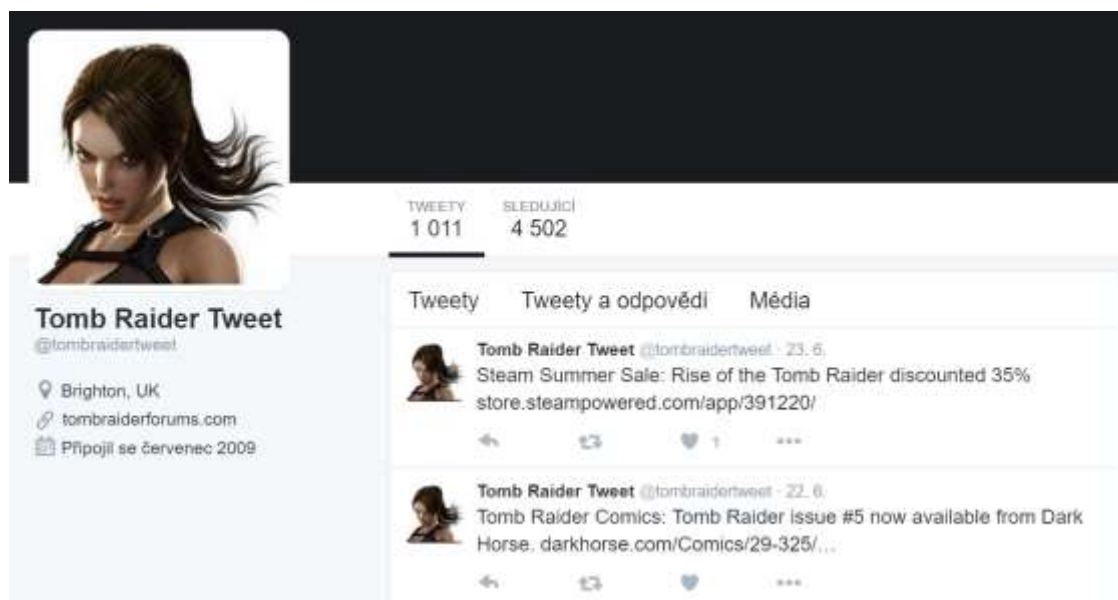


Figure 6-23: Twitter channel connected to TRC and thus TRF  
 Source: (Twitter, 2016)

All associated media kept the **high standard of the base website**. It is **unclear** to author **why** proper **hyperlinks were not placed in TRFs ecosystem**, since an encyclopaedia, news channel and a video repository would be a welcomed addition to a community as engaged in a brand as TRF was. On the other hand, this strategy did not distract users from diving into the forum's content.

Speaking of **members** however, **connectivity to other sites** was apparent. During his research, author had been offered help with questionnaire sharing. Member Chamayoo mentioned: “**French forums...German, Spanish, Japan forums,**” meanwhile Heidi\_W seemed to have access “to a very well-placed **TR resource to tweet**” author's poll. Laracroft1997 would “gladly share this on some **Facebook & twitter groups dedicated to TR and Classic Lara.**” Although not being mentioned by name, user's showed that their **interest with the topic** had **surpassed the borders of** individual gameplay and TRF.

### 6.1.8 Do sub-groups exist?

As already noted in the network structure, **tensions inside the community existed**. The major point of break was **inheritance of the brand by a new studio of developers, Crystal Dynamics**. The studio **altered gameplay** mechanics of Tomb Raider and brought about its **own variation of Lara Croft**. This probably wouldn't have caused such havoc if the situation had not been shadowed by the infamous **demise of “Lara's parents”, the Core Design studio**. Seeing how much potential AoD had and how it failed to reach the planned heights, some members switched to defensive mode. Further relationship implications will be discussed in the relationship analysis. Similarly to this, when **Crystal Dynamics became part of Square Enix** and engaged in the **series' reboot**, it **seemed like yet another inheritance**, but this time, Lara's persona and gameplay **deviated even more**.



Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-24: Two post demonstrating how the LAU vs classic quarrel had weakened over 9 years

In a thread called “Which Tomb Raider had the best story line?” few members actually paired Legend and AoD together without using contrasts (as is shown in Figure 6-24), even though some comments seemed to have resembled the 9 years old quarrel (Figure 6-25).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-25: Some comments still keep the Core Design vs. Crystal Dynamics issue alive

During the research period, the greatest tension could be seen **between reboot Lara, AoD Lara and, surprisingly, Lara**, as seen in Figure 6-26. This finding was **later confirmed with the RM questionnaire** that was used to generate the Ideal Lara Croft, **neither iteration of the heroine had matched the Ideal completely** and both AoD and reboot Lara placed in the second half of the comparison chart.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-26: Posts indicating an issue with brand’s consistency across titles

TRF had a **section dedicated entirely to sub-groups**. However this was not accessible through the forum list, but from the main control panel instead: Community -> Social groups. There were **110 social groups on the forum**, however **not all** were active and **not all attracted enough members** to be significant. First **30 groups** with the **biggest number of followers** are depicted in Figure 6-27.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-27: Sub-groups of TRF

Overviewing the whole section, **15 groups** were concerned in **video-games**, **8 groups** dealt with **pop culture**, **9 groups** were **TR oriented**, and **six** were dedicated to **creative activities**. This **division** was **not far from** the actual topics in the **main forum** section, which may have been the reason behind **low rate of engagement** in nearly all social groups.



As is showcased by the ladder, **the most prominent and active sub-group** was the **LGBT community**. Yet again, the **topic of sexuality** seemed to be **important** to the community. Threads about organised gay holiday trips, realization of one's sexuality, or about "your first gay crush" were created in this sub-community. **Besides** traditional **consocialization** in the LGBT Open Chat & LGBT Hotties post a picture thread, **some serious topics** were discussed, like HIV, homophobia, and cheating. Dating group thread was also part of the discussion, but it was carried out in a light-hearted tone.

As hinted by individual posts in main forums, **Crystal Dynamics, Core Design & AoD** got their **separate social groups**, while placing in the top 5 groups overall.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-28: Showcase of a brand continuity issue. TRF members saw releases from the two developers as separate entities, although being released underneath the same, Tomb Raider brand.

As is shown in Figure 6-28, the Crystal Dynamics group was aware of **LAU trilogy Lara** being perceived as a **separate entity**, **splitting** the **community** accordingly. In Figure 6-29, it is clear that **reboot Lara** was seen as **separately as well**, although being developed by the same studio as LAU trilogy.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-29: Reboot Lara was seen as a separate entity as well, marking another gap in brand's continuity

As in the Crystal Dynamics group, the **discussion among Core Design** titles revolved around differences in **game mechanics** and Lara Croft as well. Member mizuno suisei **blamed Crystal Dynamics** for making Lara "a \*\*\*\*take barbie," luis54321 posted his belief that CD was responsible for Core's Tomb Raider: Anniversary Edition not being released and AoD Lover **protected the developer** team from Eidos, the former publisher (Figure 6-30). These posts were rather old and discussion in the group reached its peak during the 2008-2010 period. The same applied to the AoD community. Finally, group GROZAA was directed against LAU Lara's sidekicks, Zip and Allister, and G.R.O.W.L was directed against "obvious white ledges" that made the gameplay less challenging. Members **protected core values of their beloved franchise; owned the brand by knowing exactly how it should look like; were overseeing its development**, placing criticism when needed,

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-30: Brand love in action: an example of brand knowledge & patronage against violators

Overall, social groups **served an extrinsic function** to showcase **affinity to a certain group**, rather than to split the community into sub-groups and move the discussion from the main forum section; away from the “non-believers”. The category seemed rather redundant, and therefore it would be an interesting **idea** to **provide members with more profile customization options** that would allow them to **project group membership**, such as **system of badges and icons** (as demonstrated with Figure 6-31).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-31: A possible replacement for the sub-group section, a system of badges with extrinsic value

## 6.2 Immersion: Content analysis

The following text is aimed at identification of RM theory aspects on TRF.

### 6.2.1 What type of *communitas* does TRF present?

Due to the **pop culture appeal** of the TR franchise, it would have been most unlikely for TRF to present a subculture of consumption. **Although** a significant share of **users could be seen as marginalised** due to their sexuality, the group was **not formed on this premise**, but **rather on a videogame** and a **virtual character instead**. Some widely popular artefacts of world culture can be seen in Figure 6-32.



Figure 6-32: Pop-culture-related topics on TRF

The **hierarchical structure** had been **developed** on TRF, as many members gained experience and status in a field beneficial to the community, like modding, technical support and level creation. Second **manifestation of member's position** in the group was the **number of posts** and the **title/rank** automatically generated **underneath user's nickname**. Even though this system had been active, members seemed to **treat each other in the same manner** nevertheless. Forum's hierarchy was **rather flat** and **did not make newcomers feel less than existing members**, **neither** did the hierarchy form exclusive interpersonal bonds

and benefits emerging from them, such as **exclusive treatment** and **omission from forum rules**. This was explicitly mentioned by forum's administrator, tlr online, in a thread concerning **donator ranks and perks**. Besides, **anyone could have joined** the forum and there were **no rites of passage**. Examples supporting previous statements can be seen in Figure 6-33.

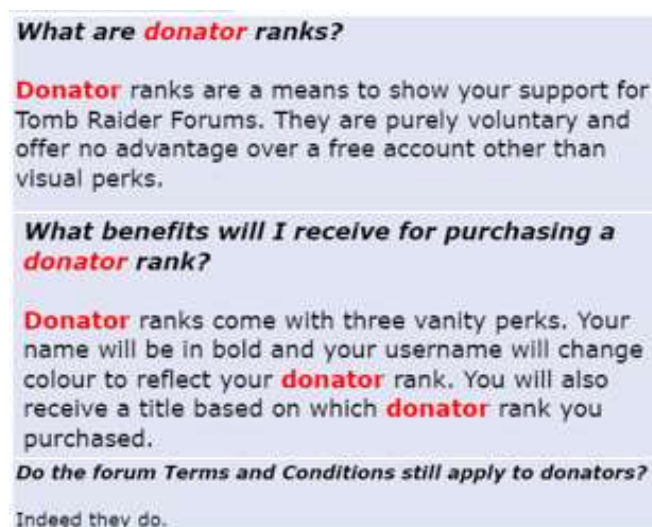


Figure 6-33: The rank system of TRF included ranks assigned in accordance to the number of posts and the donator status

**Rules existed**, but their possible **breach did not result in dramatic reaction**, but in a **warning** message or a **temporary ban** instead (as shown in Figure 6-34).



Figure 6-34: Example of how rules were „enforced“ on TRF

The community seemed to **lack restrictions for** the overall **consumer behaviour** of its members. For example allowing fandom of the Uncharted series to express their appreciation freely, although being a direct competitor to TR (Figure 6-35). There were **no bans concerning memberships in other groups** and the **variety** seemed to have been **appreciated**, spawning many threads and discussions.



Figure 6-35: Uncharted, a series that was inspired by Tomb Raider and that later inspired the TR reboot had a dedicated thread on TRF, with 854 pages worth of posts. Members expressed little to no antagonistic feelings towards the game and rather appreciated its similar gameplay to TR.

It is clear that TRF did not represent subculture of consumption. **Consumer tribe** type of community would be even more **unlikely**, since the **community** had been **stable** since its foundation and it **did not rely on a creative activity** or a **fad**, but on a **long-lasting franchise**. **Members** had to **register** to contribute and

some of them had been on the forum for **more than 10 years**, revealing their **identities** and **personal details** along the way. Such characteristics were against the transcendent and temporary nature of consumer tribes.

However, the **tribe's creativity** and **remix culture** had **emerged** with tools & modifications. As is shown in Figure 6-36, the content of **TR II** was **remixed** to create an alternative experience. In the version number 4.0 of his/her modification, member annl **replaced** the original **TR II model of Lara** with that found in **The Last Revelation**, while sourcing some of the **sound effects from Legend** and **backgrounds from AoD**. **New font, soundtrack, HD sprites and animations** (sourced from **TR Level editor designers** such as Geckokid) were added as well. It was a **mix of official and fan-made**; a completely **random conjunction of elements**; a modification created on the basis of **brand love**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-36: Tomb Raider 2 Remixed, a fan modification of TR II that remixes official and fan made content across variety of TR titles

As a proper product of spontaneity, **updates** and **bug fixes** of the mod had been done in an **irregular fashion**, however **TRF members had voluntarily tested the product** and reported bug fixes. The mod had been improved greatly since its launch in February 2015, but in June 2016 annl reported software problems preventing further work on the mod. Proposal about the **project's continuation in the hands of other members** was made on TRF: "If anyone wants to finish my mod, feel free to edit it. I may upload all the development files for the mod soon." Posts supporting this information is to be found in Figure 6-37.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-37: Modification can be improved and developed collectively

The mod wouldn't have existed if it wasn't for a **programme PixStr** created by Raider Croft and sapper: "It is a software who lets you open any TR file (from TR1 to TR5) and **edit** things like: -Models Textures -Models (with a CAD program) -Static Meshes Light. -Apply shinny effect to Movables and Meshes (NOT Static Meshes). -Add new Texture Pages and define manually size of textures. -and More. With this software, and just a little of imagination, you can **create very good models for your levels**, for example personalized **objects**, **Retextured Items**, and a Good **outfit for Lara**." (TRSearch, 2014) Screenshot of the programme can be seen in Figure 6-38.



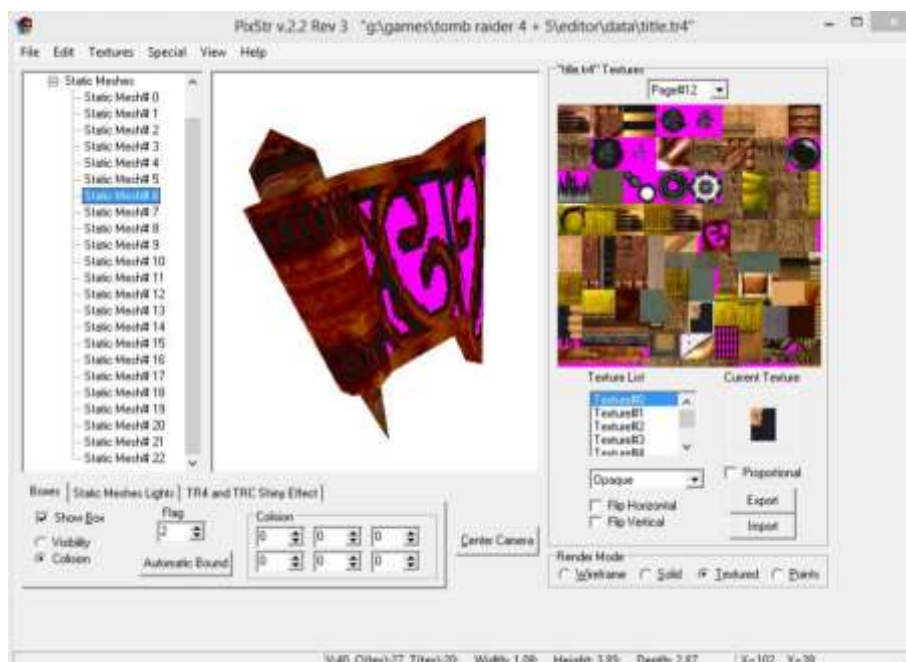


Figure 6-38: screenshot of PixSt 2.2 Rev 3, a modding tool for classic TR games  
Source: (TRSearch, 2014)

Anyone with a computer, data files from TR games and skills in photo editing and/or 3D modelling can **modify Core Design's games to one's own liking, create new content as well as to retroactively bring the new material to old titles**, as demonstrated with Figure 6-39.

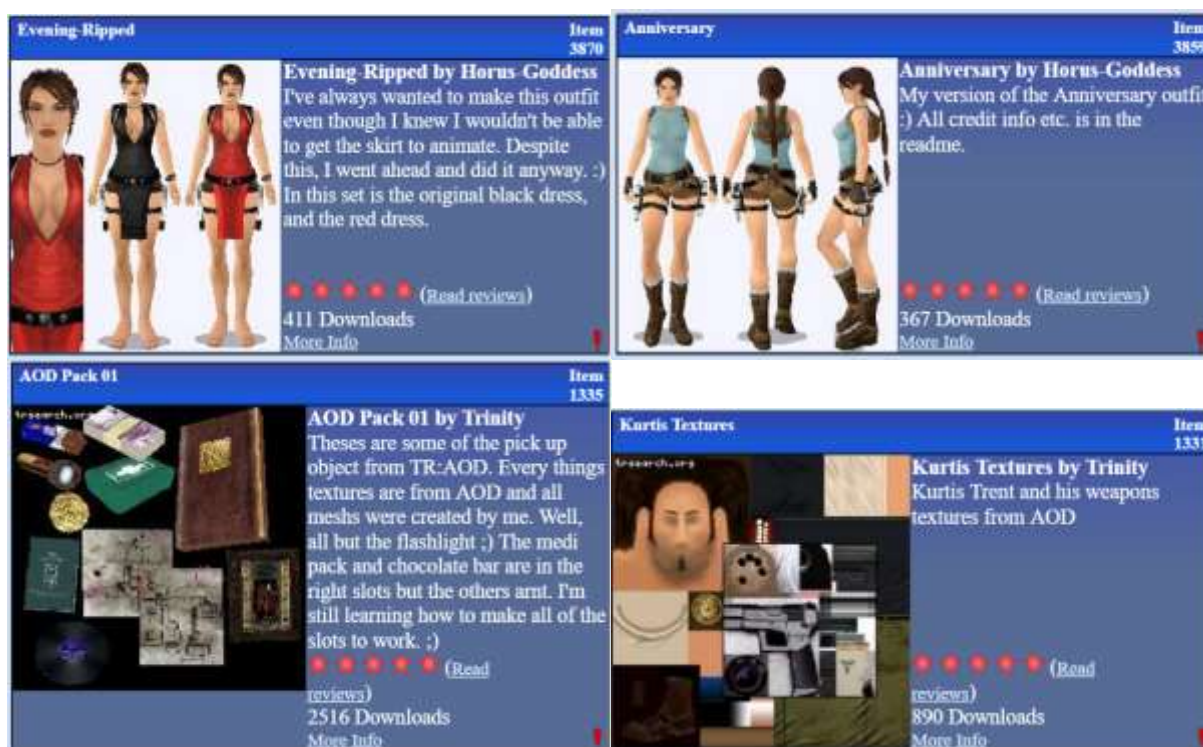


Figure 6-39: retroactive modding can result in new content being brought to classic TR titles, such as Lara's evening gown from Legend, or inventory items from AOD  
Source: (TRSearch, 2016)

Some remixing activities did not require any advanced programming and editing skills, like the revolving **MEME-iT** and **Screenshot competitions**. Both were popular on TRF and allowed **random members to engage** in them. The former had reached its 17<sup>th</sup> season, as seen in Figure 6-4,0 and the latter

267<sup>th</sup>, showing existence of demand for such activities on TRF, even though the participation in the screenshot thread had vanned.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-40: Introduction post to the 17<sup>th</sup> season of the MEME-iT competition

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-41: Entries to the MEME-iT competition

Some of creations from MEME-iT competition can be seen in Figure 6-41. **Fragmentation of Lara's persona** can be seen in two cases: The first Lara (with glasses) sees reboot Lara getting killed, the text below her face reads "heaven"; the last picture is formed in a similar manner and reboot Lara is pictured dodging bullets fired by TR1 Lara, meanwhile, TRU Lara's decapitated head is impaled on a stake. It is easy to notice the **inconsistency** in **Lara's** brand when she **is literally fighting herself** in these pictures.

## 6.2.2 What aspects of an offline community are re-created on TRF?

Obviously, TRF represented a typical **brand community**, centred on Tomb Raider & Lara Croft. The **franchise** and its **main protagonist** served as a **linking medium among forum members**. They had been talking about Lara, discussing her personality and stance towards her individual traits. When offered to fill in a questionnaire, members were eager to share their thoughts, they wanted to know other members' opinion and wanted to compare the overall results with theirs. The **franchise had intrinsic value** for members, **manifested through personality and behaviour of Lara Croft** (as seen in Figure 6-42). This medium of video game and virtual character **linked users who shared similar values, beliefs, qualities and personality traits**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-42: A showcase of how expansive the Lara Croft brand is when it comes to possible linking values

Being a **strong brand**, for some members TR had an **extrinsic function** as well. Even though being **hard to execute**, since the product is consumed mostly at home, fans had found a way to do so with **cosplay**. When dressed in a costume, members played a role of Lara Croft, looking like her and behaving like her. Through this **public exposure**, members **projected** their **affiliation** with the franchise and openly **expressed** a **natural fit** between their and franchise's values and characteristics. It is well known that **imitation is the**



**biggest form of flattery.** Besides, to form a distinguishable costume, members also had to boost a certain level of **brand knowledge**. Two examples of flawlessly executed cosplays can be seen in Figure 6-42. Just a brief look at either of the pictures is needed to identify the heroine, and even the source iteration of her.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-43: Reboot (2013) and TR I Lara cosplays by forum members Scion21 and XtremeJenn.

Members felt **emotionally connected** to each other, **even though** being **geographically dispersed**. The consciousness of a kind was apparent when dealing with newcomers (**people they have never met**), who got treated in a very **emphatic** and **friendly manner**. In a thread focused on one of the new member's issues with sexuality, the community demonstrated that perfectly, while ticking another box in the consciousness of a kind repertoire, **fluid hierarchy** and **openness** when it came to **gender, sexuality or race**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-44: TRF community welcomed a new member instantly and provided friendly support on the spot

**Anyone who loved TR and was devoted to it** was seen as a **valid member**. Although being a newbie, Melbelg demonstrated brand devotion with an impressive collection of TR themed games, cards, magazines, figures and many more. This lead to a spontaneous discussion with another collector on the forum who had been a member since 2005. The **hierarchy** was truly **flat**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-45: Newbie Melbelg posted pictures of his/her impressive collection of TR merchandise and got an instant positive reception from one of the senior member of the community

Members were **aware** that **they belong to the community** and they **felt different from other forums as well**. TRF and its members: "respect everyone's opinion"; "are diverse and open"; "has family-like atmosphere"; "are more polite"; "are cheekier than people on the official forum"; "allows more in-depth discussion about TR than other social media." Just a brief search brought author to posts in Figure 6-46. **Members called tombraiderforums.com TRF and labelled themselves as TRF members**. The community was a **special, non-generic spot** for them to socialize. Because of the openness and diversity, **no direct enemy of the community was spotted**, even the Uncharted series seemed to be popular because of its similarity to TR.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-46: Examples of consciousness of a kind

Community **knew history of the brand**, its **origins** and **people** connected to its development, production and promotion. Members were aware of Lara's origins, development teams, voice actors, and even music composers. Complex knowledge of each game **surpassed the information presented in-game**. Members recalled old **commercials**, **magazine articles**, **interviews** and accompanying lore from **manuals**, **box art** and official **statements**. The knowledge of the franchise was so extensive that members referenced **unreleased material**, **beta versions** of games and even **hidden content**.

In Figure 6-47, member NCFirebolt21 was able to **identify** a specific **music piece used in a trailer** for TRU, which required "some detective work" as stated in the forum post itself. Without proper **brand knowledge**, this would have been impossible to detect, without **brand love** it would have interested nobody.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-47: Brand love came with an incredible knowledge of it and with willingness to analyse it in utmost detail

Thread called **Magazine scans** had been active since 2007 and spawned 107 pages worth of material. Just as the central repository TRC, this built **lore** that was used in further discussions (Figure 6-48).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-48: TRF community had its own repository of knowledge in a form of Magazine scans thread

Tomb Raider Beta Compilation thread accumulated links to all core design **public beta versions of individual TR titles** (as seen in Figure 6-49). This sparked a discussion about **differences between beta and final products**, as users **decomposed individual elements of the game**. Other than that, it was part of a common lore that Legend included a hidden bazooka weapon; that AoD had some unused audio tracks and items in its game files, and that one can access hidden outfits in TRU via a specialized software. To provide evidence, author found a post from Xico15 who posted instructions about how to enable hidden sprint and long-jump animations for Kurtis, the second playable character in AoD.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-49: Limited and hidden TR related materials were not safe from community's eager fandom either

Thread from 2014 **investigated origins** and game concept of the sixth TR game, Angel of Darkness. User .snake. apparently got his hands on **unreleased documents** from Murti Schofield, the lead writer of AoD. In one of his/her posts, .snake. revealed a **cut level** called Castle Kriegler. The documents **leaked** in full one year later and members engaged in a passionate discussion about AoD's original storyline. The information became part of **forum's shared lore** and Murti's documents were even quoted during author's research (as seen in Figure 6-50).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-50: Unreleased story concept for AoD was discovered, shared, discussed and saved to community's lore

Besides magazine scans, concept materials and hidden content, users also **enjoyed brand related commercials**. Spread across multiple threads, members shared and discussed TR and Lara related ads and **joked about their content**. The Lucozade commercial and Angel of Darkness music video being some of them. One member confessed that he drank Lucozade purely because of the commercial with Lara and other bought and kept a bottle because it was identical to the one in the commercial. It seemed that **TRF members were not against marketing and mainstream appeal of the franchise**. In fact, they **appreciated when Lara appeared on TV, or in a magazine**, as demonstrated with Figure 6-51.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-51: TRF, as a brand community, appreciated marketing artefacts of the franchise

Members had been **watching over the franchise** and its **development, safeguarding** who "real" Lara Croft is and **how a Tomb Raider game should look like** (Figure 6-52). Googling "real Lara" on the TRF domain returned 583 results. For example, member ESCachuli argued that "real Lara" speaks only when necessary, which was in a stark contrast with Legend **Lara's talkativeness**. CrisGer was disgusted with **realistic portrayal of violence** in TR reboot, labelling it as "sad travesty" and "horrible exploitation of the series." Not only CrisGer but also user Moon-Safari tackled the exact same issue as author in his self-reflection essay, **Lara's skill level**. Moon-Safari, just as author, complained about how Lara had been reduced from flashy superhero to "Stephany Meyers ass Bella Katness 50 Shades of Lara," aka weak persona. Moon-Safari

closed his post with “...we would be seeing Lara become Lara,” implicating that the series’ **canon** had been **violated**, causing **major displeasure** among loyal fans. **Same thing applied to game mechanics alterations**, criticism was levied on obvious white ledges, lack of tough puzzles and manual grab or absence of twin pistols.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-52: Showcase of brand ownership and safekeeping, materialized through posts about „the real Lara.“

Author **did not find** any **TR related ritual or recurring event**, besides forum games. Lara Croft was naturally appreciated and could have been seen as the holy totem of the group. This theory had fallen short because some members expressed their devotion for the game, rather than Lara herself. If **looked at out of the box**, the **ritual** would present **gameplay sessions of each individual** TRF member and the **totem the gameplay mechanics & production value of the series** along **Lara’s personality traits & behaviour**. It is them, who **link the community together**.

### 6.2.3 Sense of moral responsibility:

As hinted by many previous posts, there was a strong sense of moral responsibility on the forum. Members **looked after each other when it came to rules**, **posting alerts** before moderators got involved. This ensured consistency across the forum and **responsible behaviour** towards other user’s internet **bandwidth, viewing experience** and even **age**, since **explicit content** was **nowhere to be found**. In a thread discussing animal cruelty, its author removed the posted disturbing video after receiving complaints. The thread was later filled with “spam” pictures and got closed by a moderator, as shown in Figure 6-53. It can be said that users **stick to values** and **obeyed rules**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-53: Sense of moral responsibility affects the posted content and makes TRF safe for wide viewership

Head banner of TRF itself indicated that visitors could find **hints, tips** and **support** concerning the franchise.



Figure 6-54: TRF banner

Source: (Tombr Raiderforums, 2016)

This fluently translated into actions with creation of the **Technical support forum** that was aimed to **assist with product use**. For example, member ajrich17901 had **frame rate** and **resolution issues** with **classis TR games** on Windows 8.1 platform. Three hours later, user charmedangelin posted a **solution** to the screen size-problem, giving link to a **third party site** concerned with PC gaming. The **fix** worked for ajrich17901, who received tip from charmedangelin for his second issue few hours later (Figure 6-55).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-55: Members assisted each other with product use

Support **went beyond Technical support forum** and spread across individual **sub-forums as well**. In thread named “Windowed ?”, member Tombraiderplay wanted to run TR II in a **windowed mode**. Since the original release was not designed with this option in mind, member Peixoto provided link to a third party **fix**.

Similarly to this, user barracuda415 created a support thread for TR I. Users were given step-by-step **instructions on how to run the game on modern operating systems and hardware**, as shown in Figure 6 -56. Similar patch was provided for Tomb Raider 4 and 5. What had been most **impressive** about this type of support was how professional it was. Users **willingly** spent their free time to **make the product usable**, they **preserved it for next generations** of gamers, for next brand lovers. It can be said that TRF members helped each other to **fix problems with product use**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-56: Members had been preserving the product’s usability via unofficial patches

Not only that, but some **modders altered** the **game** to make it **better than the original**. User Sardoc modded the Unfinished business expansion for TR I to include **music**. This mod added triggers to specific spots in the game to enhance the atmosphere and to bring it closer to the base game. **Unused resources** of the original game were also discovered and implemented in the game’s soundtrack. Peixoto **modded** TR II to support real **widescreen resolution**; **modern game controllers**, to **add cheats** and **de-interlace the FMVs**. The **product’s functionality was extended** by its customers. **Tips** had been **shared** about **how to increase the performance of the brand**. All that **specialised** and **time demanding work done willingly**, from love to the franchise.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-57: Members extended the product’s functionality with mods



Based on previous text, it was no wonder that users **spread positive word of mouth** about the brand, **both in personal and digital sphere**. User ~\*~Chloe~\*~ set up a thread with a clear goal to make Alison Carroll, one of the official **Lara Croft models**, trend on Twitter. Users swarmed around a **trailer** for TR (2013) in a thread accurately named “TRAILER HERE!!! Spread this link like a disease!!!” The idea met positive reception and users **shared links for the official promotional material** like there was no tomorrow. Similar thread was set up on the game’s launch day, to make it trend on Twitter. In author’s own research thread, user Quebsenuel posted how his friends get annoyed with TR “because how often he is referencing it,” which meant that he/she had no problems **sharing his affection for the franchise with public**. Same applied to many other members. It would be wise for game’s publisher to **give TRF an opportunity to participate in a social media campaign**, or give them some **shareable content** that would **project love** for the franchise.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-58: TRF members were willing to share their appreciation for the brand through social media accounts

#### 6.2.4 Does the community participate in the process of co-creation? If yes, what, why, and how do they create such content?

It is clear that TRF participated in the **process of co-creation**. There were **patches, mods, drawings, wallpapers, videos, cosplays, new levels**, and many more. The community seemed to be **eager to share its ideas**. Member davenport even expressed a **wish concerning fan input for the franchise**: “I hope this (*Lara Croft questionnaire*) is for Square Enix on their Next TR Game so they can see who and what Lara is...”

When a proper **tool like XNA** Lara emerged, **new promotional materials** quickly **proliferated**. Members created new wallpapers and artwork with the **3D posing programme**. Such a small and simple tool spawned **6462 pages of posts!!! All flooded with user creations**. Although the tool had the **potential to be exploited**, many creations were actually beautiful and **usable for official promotion**. Some artwork represented a **re-creation of old TR promo**, while the rest was **original content**. **Mixing of popular culture** also occurred, with the Mortal Kombat and Twilight inspired renders, all shown with Figure 6-59.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-59: Pictures created with the XNA Lara 3D posing tool, including re-creation of old content, representative wallpapers, pop-culture references and tool hijacking.



Other example was TR Legend modding. Just like with XNA Lara tool, the thread had been active for many years. 10 years after the **TexMod** and **Tomb Ripper** tools had been introduced, members still post their **custom outfits for Legend Lara**, although the activity ceased significantly in 2013. The thread had **1349 pages of posts**. Yet again, members seemed to bring both pre and post Legend content to the game, like the swimsuit from TRU and mix it with other cultural content, such as Dynasty Warriors 5 (video game), as seen in Figure 6-60.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-60: Tools were developed by fans to customize Lara's looks in TR Legend. This resulted in original, pop-culture-inspired and cross-TR content.

Besides the official TR Level editor from the Chronicles era, **no tool originated from developers**, which seemed like a **missed opportunity**, given the fans **enthusiasm** and **high level of involvement** with the franchise, combined with **technical competencies & artistic spirit**.

### 6.2.5 Does TRF have its mavens?

Author uncovered an example of mevenism. User shockwave\_pulsar00 **thoroughly reviewed** the new Play Arts Kai RotTR **figure** and posted a structured thread with pictures and even a review video, as seen in Figure 6-61.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-61: One member reviewed a piece of TR-related merchandise, curating the content to others

Original poster **inspired** some members **to actually purchase** the figurine. User mandylane did not even know about the figurines existence until the thread appeared online. **As a maven**, shockwave\_pulsar00 informed the community about product's quality, **raised awareness about current offer** and **provided an in-depth review** as a **base for rational consumer behaviour** process. The **review** was also **believable** since the **member** was part of the community **since 2005** and having 1,776 posts tied to an account.

Since TRF was a **brand community**, any **merchandising activities** did not disperse or offend it, but were **embraced instead**. It would be a great **idea** for Square Enix to actually **send promotional copies of any TR related products to established members** to spread awareness and motivate purchase. Since members have **bonds** and **reputation** inside the community and are **sincere** to each other, any **false advertising** would be **improbable** or **quickly uncovered**, thus the reliability of such communication would only benefit the brand. The only conditional would be the quality of the product itself.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-62: Mavenism associated with content curation resulted in a positive response, raised awareness and became a purchase impulse

## 6.2.6 Do the developers/ publishers include TRF in a brand network orbit? If yes, how?

Square Enix **focused more on its own forum**, rather than 3<sup>rd</sup> party ones, although **TRC** was **mentioned in the list of approved fan sites** on TR official site. It is possible to visit **approximately 49 fan sites** through the official web and see fan artwork there. Both TRC and TRF received an “**Official fansite**” **badge** in 2016, encapsulating both sites to the **brand network orbit**, as demonstrated with Figure 6-63.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-63: TRF was included in TR's brand network orbit via link on the official site and custom badges

In 2010, Crystal Dynamics requested the community to vote for a piece of DLC that would appear for a priority download. User Keir\_Eidos, an ex-employee of Eidos (publisher of the original series and AoD), motivated users to place a vote. No further communication was done and the **request** seemed to be **global, rather than focused solely on TRF**.

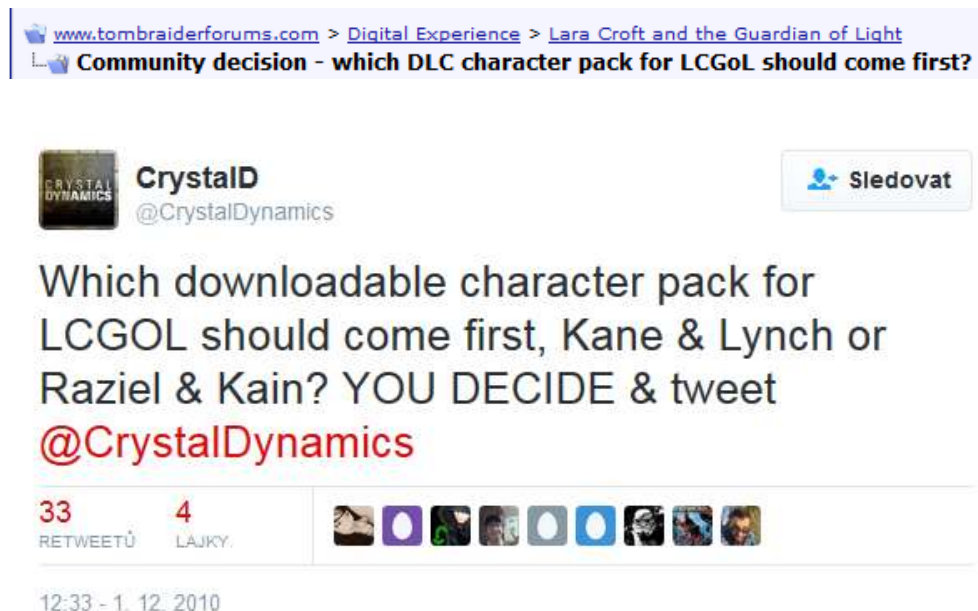


Figure 6-64: A rather underwhelming attempt on the co-creation of value by Crystal Dynamics

**Meagan Marie**, member of the forum since 2010, was elected as the **community manager for Crystal Dynamics**. As such, Meagan's goal was to “be involved in many facets of **social media**” and to “act as a **liaison between the studio and various communities** throughout the world.” Other tasks, mentioned in her

2011 post, included attending worldwide **events**, giving demos and to help to execute **long-term media strategies**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-65: Meagan Marie was elected as the official community manager for Crystal Dynamics

On TRF, Meagan **informed community** about upcoming gaming **events**, **shared thoughts** and information about **upcoming titles** and **promotions**. Users **shared such content spontaneously** and with enthusiasm, often **outrunning Maegan** herself. Videos and new material were posted before Meagan could do it herself. All is supported with Figure 6-66.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-66: Meagan informed TRF about upcoming events as a proper community manager would do

The TRF community seemed to **love Meagan**, calling her “**one of us, a Tomb Raider fan**,” and even set up a **fan club dedicated to her**. Members wished Meagan happy birthday, posted interviews and pictures of her doing **cosplay**. Dressing up as Lara showcased **love for the brand** and helped Meagan to be **appreciated further**. Her involvement in “offline” events produced many visual material that was digitalized and posted on the forum, making Meagan a “**real person**,” as shown in one of the photographs in Figure 6-67. There was not much left to be desired from RM’s perspective, as Meagan was an ideal community manager and a fellow TR fan.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-67: Meagan Marie and content created in her honor

Given the **breadth** of PR activities, **Meagan Marie handled the communication well**, even **requesting input** from TRF for a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the series, which could be seen as a **rare attempt** for the **co-creation** process.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-68: A call to arms, the co-creation request for TR’s 20th anniversary campaign by Crystal Dynamics

In 2014 Meagan **said her goodbye** as the community manager, but was **re-elected five months later**, to the community’s delight, as shown in Figure 6-69.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-69: Members were pleased to see Meagan return as the community manager

At the time of the research, Meagan was focused on the **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities** which involved the **co-creation** process and also **clarified** some of **speculations** concerning some of the informational leaks about RotTR's DLC, as demonstrated with Figure 6-70.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-70: As a good community manager, Meagan clarified speculations clouding the franchise

Overall, the **community management** was **not bad at all**. However, it **lacked a platform**, a **tool** for TRF members to **use** and **misuse**, a tool **to be creative with**. Seeing the current state of Lara Croft, the studio also **hadn't collected information about Lara's core persona**, which resulted in a **split in the community**. Other than that, it appeared that Square Enix & Crystal Dynamics were **doing a good job at relationship marketing**. Further summary and recommendations will be part of the following chapters.

### 6.3 Research log & diary

#### Pre-entry log (October 2015 – May 2016)

*"I am happy that Justin allowed me to do the research, it was very important to find a suitable subject for both theories and TRF was just too good to let go. As this is my first try with relationship marketing and netnography, I know the results won't be perfect, but how am I supposed to improve if I don't take risks? Honestly, this was the central idea of this whole research, to try something new, something that would fit me more than those barebones questionnaires we have practiced many times. I have done it once again, I choose the more difficult path. Seriously, I should seek a doctor. Anyway, I believe in capabilities of the community. TR, and especially the original series, require a certain level of intelligence to play and finish them, so I hope TRF won't reject my quest for knowledge and will help me with this research. It's very similar to an archaeological dig after all. But instead of tombs, I have the forum and instead of artefacts, I will search for thoughts."*

#### Start (May 29<sup>th</sup>)

*"I am ready to launch the research. I am quite nervous about the reactions, but I don't think I can improve my approach any further. I placed my bet on the informational appeal of the introductory post and on the emotional appeal of the video. It's both informative and entertaining, structured and chaotic. While*

*writing the introduction, I was aware of how I can influence positive reception of it by making the content and form familiar to the community as much as possible. But frankly, it was an afterthought. I am creative and have a sense for humour, all these jokes were spontaneous and the design choice felt like a second nature. The post was built on sincerity, since that's what I expect in return. Let's hope it works."*

First interaction, surprisingly, took shape of a Facebook friendship request that author accepted. Second friendship request arrived with first two posts in the introductory topic. Both posts were positive about the research and wanted to get involved. The thread has accumulated over 40 views from 5PM to 10PM. Author replied to both posts in Figure 6-71.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-71: First two posts in the Introductory thread

### **Two days after launch (May 30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>)**

By the second day, the post had been viewed 195 times (as of 11AM). One of the first posters took his time to view the video, as promised, and responded positively about its contents while recommending extra sites to extend the research, as shown in Figure 6-72. The game case that author was holding in the video also got some attention, since it was mostly available in central and east Europe. Information about the release were sent as a reply. lance6439 also posted on author's TRF Visitor messages wall, sharing some personal background and interest about author's native language (Czech).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-72: A reply to the introductory video

Author also received another Facebook friendship request, this time followed by a message asking "how is it (the research) going along." Author shared information about current state of things. The discussion later followed the release of an upcoming TR movie and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book. Author messaged some details about the research and his personal interest in the Anniversary publication, as shown in Figure 6-73.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-73: Three members sent author a friend request on Facebook, one of them wrote author a message



User LateRaider joined the conversation in the main thread, expressing his fascination in the topic. What's interesting is that the "vast majority of active users" got labelled by LateRaider as "catty gays", which got approved with written "hehe" and a jumping smiley emoticon by the following post from Lyle Croft.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-74: Another two posters reacting to the introductory thread on TRF

Communication with lance6439 continued through visitor's wall and PM. lance6439 was willing to answer research questions directly, but was informed that such exhausting way of data collection is not necessary and that it will be split into more questionnaires and focused threads.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-75: Author clarifying research methods to lance6439

At the end of the day, author accepted another FB friendship request and the topic generated about 300 views. The theme of sexuality couldn't be ignored, as 3 out of 4 people replying to the main thread were openly gay.

*"So far, I've got a great feeling from the research. Although I haven't started with anything specific yet, the reception has been positive. There are no comments that would be directly negative or rejecting. It seems that the idea of a "TRF archaeological dig" connected with members well. It is also interesting how the topic of sexuality got pushed forward. I have to include some questions about it in the future questionnaire and also keep my eyes on role model factors of Lara's personality. I guess it will show in the factor analysis. If it wasn't for my absolver ball at my home university this Friday and the collapse of my parent's computer, I would have started with some in-depth info about the community. Tomorrow I have to finish with fixing the PC, otherwise my parents won't be able to Skype me once I am back in Vienna. But in the train, I can continue with writing one of the theoretical parts of the thesis. Ah, the sheer chaos."*

### **The online investigation (June 1<sup>st</sup>)**

*"I have started with the global web investigation about Tomb Raider and I must say that I see strong similarities among my self-reflection, thoughts of TRF and of general, gaming public. I've gone through official web, fan blogs, wikis, Steam and YouTube and, so far, the themes seem to repeat: focus on graphics and tech achievements; solitary environments, puzzles and peacefulness vs. adrenaline FMVs, gunplay, and ever-present commentary; old, silent, comic book Lara vs. new, talkative, vulnerable Lara. Then there are constant mentions about legacy and nostalgia, but they are dwarfed in comparison to heaps of comments*



about Lara being a sex icon, and frankly, a sex object. Gender and sexuality is mentioned in terms of playing as a female protagonist and even placing Lara as a gay icon. This leads to the last part, Lara is seen as self-confident role model and an inspiration for fan fiction, fan art and videos. TR franchise is strong and surely capable of inducing brand love. I gathered enough keywords to describe the game mechanics and design and to piece together Lara's personality. I will include those options in future questionnaires."

### Questionnaire nr. 1 and TRF socialization dig (June 27<sup>th</sup>)

"I have finally went through the 8 hours of video footage of nearly all Tomb Raider games. I created a questionnaire from all previous sub-researches and I must say that it blended nicely. I asked three TRF members to test the questionnaire through Google Forms. Two of my requests have been answered and, based upon the reception, I've fixed to mistakes in the form. I've seem to forget the option that somebody hasn't played the new TR title yet, but at the same time included it in another question," as shown in Figure 6-76.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-76: Member moodydog pointing out missing options of the RM questionnaire

"Then I messed up one sexuality option by writing transsexual instead of transgender. Since every other sexuality ended with \*sexual, my brain did this automatically. What a nasty mistake, especially on a forum that's so diverse when it comes to this aspect," thankfully, member LateRaider reminded author of the mistake, as shown in Figure 6-77.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-77: Second feedback PM concerned a mislabeled sexuality option

"Anyway I think I did a good job with fusing truckloads of material into one questionnaire. For example, it took me hours of contemplation to distinguish the ironic & scathing tone of voice from the light-hearted joking. It seemed the same at first, but the way Legend Lara spoke was so much different than the overall expression of AoD Lara that I had to tear the humour aspect into two. As I progressed through analysis, more and more traits emerged retroactively. I had to go through the material over and over again to have a proper comparison chart. But in the end, I think I know who Lara Croft is and since she has been very stable in terms of personality, I think the questionnaire covers her from all angles of view.

I am also analysing the socialization system on TRF and I must say that the forum is flooded with creative ideas, helpful posts, tips & tricks, and artefacts from the series, but also with supportive material. The mood ranges from intellectual, across humorous, to serious, and even sad. But the point is that I am able

to read through it with interest, since some posts reveal serious personal problems that I can relate to. Whether it be depression or a simple state of annoyance with hot weather. With easygoing threads about pictures and funny videos; threads where you can share your current mood; past purchases and so on, I could imagine myself spending some time with the platform every day. Shame I am so stressed with this thesis that I simply cannot get into a state of feeling relaxed anymore. And I am very anxious when it comes to generating at least 100 responses with the RM questionnaire. We will see.”

### **Success of relationships (June 28<sup>th</sup>)**

*“The questionnaire was a success! It has attracted 1714 views and spawned 91 posts in just 24 hours. 115 respondents have engaged in the research, helping me to cross the statistical minimum in one day. The accumulation of answers was fast due to users being interested in Lara. They own the brand, they want to express their opinion, they know how real Lara looks like. It is interesting to see the results so far, going against the rebooted Lara because she lacks some of the crucial aspects fans hold dearly. AoD Lara seems to hold a special spot in the results as well, but in a positive manner. She is the last Core Design Lara afterall, the last iteration created by “the owners”. However, I must say that Legend Lara is not doing bad either and that elements of emotion are less of a problem than I expected. Fans want Lara to be mildly emotional. One freeform response stated that she is not an “ice queen” and that she cares, which has been the truth since TR II. Overall, I see how important the relationship here is. It makes the userbase strong and devoted, but at the same time, developers have a hard time introducing new material.*

*Reboot Lara seems to have betrayed some of Lara’s core features and, as such, lost favour of big portion of the community. Although the game is very popular and well received, it is a question whether it is because its technical specs, which are benchmark worthy, or because of Lara’s persona? Does the new Lara have the same, distinct character? Does she have the capacity to create relationships? Or are majority of users just young consumers, trying the “new and cool game?”. Should the franchise focus on spectacular graphics and cinematic quality of the production to exploit the “technical marvel” zeitgeist. Or to focus on Lara’s persona to facilitate long-lasting relations? That’s a question.”*

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

**Figure 6-78: The reception of the RM questionnaire was positive**

Multiple members **praised complexity of the questionnaire** and labelled it as thorough, as shown in Figure 6-78. The **enthusiasm for results** was expressed many times and posters seemed to have **enjoyed filling the answers** as well. Heidi\_w even wanted to share the questionnaire via Twitter, but was advised by another member not to do so, to preserve the representativeness of results. Author thanked Heidi\_w for enthusiasm nevertheless, as shown in Figure 6-79.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-79: Heidi\_w wanted to spread the questionnaire beyond TRF's borders

The problematics of **sub-groups within TRF** had emerged again with members distinguishing mainly between **classic Lara**, **AoD Lara** and **reboot Lara**. As author recalls, such quarrel was **once between LAU era Lara and AoD**, but it seemed to have moved to the reboot instead. Laracroft1997's post also indicated that there are **tensions inside the community** that could possibly lead to "attack", as demonstrated with Figure 6-80.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-80: Two posts marking a split in the community and Lara Croft's brand

The theme of sexuality had proved to be "a thing" once again. While creating the "what gender are you" question, author has omitted the option of other, which resulted in a minor, yet very friendly, complaint. TRF users seemed to be **open minded** and **outspoken about the topic of sexuality**, yet had demonstrated **leniency** by **not forcing the opinions** on others. The result was **informative and stimulating**, instead of defensive and off-putting, as shown in Figure 6-81.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-81: A post suggesting an extension in options for the gender question in the RM questionnaire

**Lara's sex appeal** did not go unmentioned either. It is indicated with posts from Hazelphoenix and Ceamonks890 that the topic is **engaging** and even **self-reflecting**. "I enjoy her more for her personality and the types of adventures she tends to go on, than her appearance," made it obvious that Lara has the **capacity to create relationships**, where the set of **personality traits** and **behavioural patterns** serve as a **medium**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-82: Topic of Lara's sex appeal was brought about by multiple users

The **questionnaire was very long, yet only one post mentioned exhaustion**. That could be interpreted as willingness to share an opinion about Lara. It demonstrated how **brand love** can make fans **willingly sacrifice their time** and **put effort into activities connected with the beloved brand**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-83: Member Vinkula mentioned the questionnaire's length, but filled it in nevertheless

Speaking of **brand love**, user robm\_2007 could **spot individual Lara iterations** in the questionnaire's answers, which indicated **good brand knowledge**, as an important component of brand equity.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-84: Vast brand knowledge allowed members to see individual TR titles in the plethora of options

The questionnaire was **stimulating** for few members. For example PallasAthene labelled some questions as "difficult" even though being "very long time fan." Similarly to this, Reggie evaluated the questions as "surprisingly searching". This could indicate that the franchise had deep roots in hearts of many fans and that Lara Croft is a complex persona with many attributes.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-85: Members took the quest to construct the Ideal Lara seriously

*"The other thing that strikes me about TRF is how **open to intellectual activities** it is. There was not a single post against my research, not a single word labelling it as useless or exploiting to the community. It seems that the **Lara's quest for knowledge** got **translated well** to the forum, where majority of users are either university graduates or are still students. **I have no clue why doesn't Square Enix communicate with TRF more**, since they are so **eager to share their ideas**. I know that there were some ambassadors on the site, but still. The **platform** is **suitable**, the **users** are **creative, educated and intelligent**. They are an **ideal source for co-creation of value** and they do create it themselves! The **modding**, the **artwork** and everything! And my questionnaire was very long, yet nearly no one complained. But maybe the research was well received because I am a legit member of the community and I've done everything I could to make it as transparent as possible. Anyway, I wouldn't have a problem wearing a TRF T-shirt on the street, that's how fine the forum is. And besides the thread about "how Kylie Jenner looks like Lara", I've gotten little cringe so far."*

#### **All engaged, all contemplating (29<sup>th</sup> of June)**

*"The **questionnaire** has been answered by **137 respondents**, the **thread** has generated **119 replies** and **2,519 views**. More users offered their assistance with future polls; expressed their excitement with upcoming results, and even thanked me for investing my time in the topic. I couldn't be happier."*

Member frankgberry demonstrated **group awareness** as well as some sense for **group solidarity**, giving up his/her chance to win a Steam voucher in favour of more active users, as seen in Figure 6-86.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-86: User frankgberry demonstrated group solidarity

Daventry expressed what author had been thinking about before, the **co-creation process**. TRF member wanted... no, they were **eager to share their opinion about the franchise**, as shown in Figure 6-87.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-87: Some members were willing to engage in the co-creation process

**Topic of sexuality** emerged once again, but this time, in a different manner. Ceamonks890 brought up an interesting point of view, from **perspective of a straight male**, as seen in Figure 6-88. *“And never have I looked at Lara that way, because firstly, **she isn’t real**. And secondly, because I **enjoy her more for her personality and the types of adventures she tends to go on, than her appearance**,”* was a relationship heavy statement. Both **attraction** and **congruence** are **part of brand love**, but the **inner fit of beliefs and values** seem to be of higher value, and it is **long lasting**. **Lara Croft’s personality matters**, it is analysed, discussed and self-reflected on.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-88: Brand congruence were mentioned in Ceamonks890’s post

Heidi\_W had, yet again, **offered help with questionnaire proliferation**. Laracroft1997 and Chamayoo **did not hesitate to offer a use of their personal social media accounts** to spread the link. TRF was **connected to other social media via its users**, which is a very important aspect. Members were **open to express their affinity** with the series, even **beyond their networked individualities** on TRF (Figure 6-89).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-89: User’s were open to express affinity with the franchise via their personal social media accounts and share the questionnaire

The **expressive function of the series** was repeated with Quebsenuel’s post, as seen in Figure 6-90, who wanted to *“send the link to my friends who hate Lara and Tomb Raider bc how often I’m referencing it.”*



This meant that Quebsenuéf had been **using Lara and Tomb Raider as a mean of constructing own persona and projecting it towards others.**

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-90: TR brand had an expressive function

The poll and Lara served **impressive function** as well. User Zreen001 wanted to compare his/her answers with poll results, indicating the need to know how his/her individual Lara matches to the image of community; **if the ideal matches values of the community** (Figure 6-91).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-91: User Zreen001 was curious whether his/her ideal Lara matches the community's choice; whether the values match

Explicit content & **violence** made danraid think about Lara's approach to danger, while clearly being **against animal abuse** (Figure 6-92).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-92: Member danraid was polemizing about Lara's stance to violence

Members like Shark Blade simply asked for poll's results, which meant that the whole **project is of interest to the community**. And lastly, one of the members **thanked author for conducting the research**, both can be seen in Figure 6-93.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-93: Members asked for results & expressed their pleasure

*“Overall I am glad that I chose this questionnaire, because it was the one that benefited the community the most. I dare to say that users would participate in the game-oriented research where I could put some questions about industry-related-issues as well. **Questionnaire about Lara engaged them in a process of discussion and self-reflection about a topic they have been talking and thinking about on a regular basis.** It was natural for me to do so, but as I look back at the decision, the **risqué sacrifice** of my time with a vast, Lara-focused sub-research has opened the door of the community for me. **It was a gift, and now they want to help me out in return. And that's what relationship marketing is about!**”*



## 17.6.2016 – Results galore

*“I have managed to compile the flood of data into one infographic. It’s done, I made it! I was not really sure up until I saw the final table, and it made sense. The bits and pieces for each Lara created a portrait for each, revealing their ups and downs. The results just fit. The internet inspection, my introspection, my RotTR notes, objective analysis and TRF’s opinion mirror each other, they touch the same themes and present many, but similar opinions. I also think that the method could be usable for different video games, but for strong brands only. The final product is an overview of the TR franchise and a bag of sorted marbles that have to be put together to create the winning set. Phew, what a relief.”*

Author combined the objective TR franchise analysis with poll results and created an infographic. The questionnaire’s results and grading table are part of the 6.4 sub-chapter. The **final TRF post attracted 2,302 views and 63 replies**. The **reception was very polarized**. Figure 6-94 depicts **positive** posts that **appreciated author’s effort** and results.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-94: Members appreciated extensive results

Other posts pointed out result that were **concerned with the community** rather than Lara’s persona (Figure 6-95).

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-95: Some members put focus on TRF’s statistics

Some posts **criticized the research methodology**, whether it was the **omission of two TR titles, limited reach** of the research or the **added subjective opinion in the infographic** (Figure 6-96). User Trenton concluded that: *“This is TRF. No one is gonna take this as objective fact unless it happens to support their own opinion (in which case they will treat it as a holy law written in stone).”* Author did his best to preserve as much objectivity as possible, but qualitative material needed his input nevertheless. To explain the methodology, author later posted an infographic for others to see. To make results more representative, a further expansion of the questionnaire to other forums would be ideal, but this was not feasible for a single study. All the **criticism was taken into an account for further research**.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-96: Members criticised the methodology from various perspectives

The thread also resulted in a mild “flame war” between fans of the **classic** and **reboot Lara**, between **Core Design** and **Crystal Dynamics**. Some users even pointed it out in advance, as shown in Figure 6-97. The **split in the community** proved once again.

Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-97: Results sparked an emotional discussion among TRF's sub-groups

*“Posting the final results was a nerve wrecking process for me, as they encapsulated so much information and side analyses that one could easily overlook or misinterpret something. There was praise, but criticism as well. For future research I would suggest posting the methodology right away to enlighten parts that can be seen as objective and highlight those that are based on researcher’s opinion. I stand by these results nevertheless. I fulfilled the requirements set by the methodology and presented an external and internal analysis. I did an introspective netnography that fused with opinions of others and that uncovered strong threads of connection between me, the brand and other TR fans all over the globe. The warm welcome, voluntary participation, exciting discussion, spontaneous praise and critique only verified how engaging the brand is, how deep it reaches, and how much some of the fans love it. And that, ladies and gentlemen, was the whole point of this research.”*

## 6.4 Instantiation: results of research

**Questionnaire answers** were used to **construct Ideal Lara**. All the tables and figures can be viewed in Appendix 6. The **following approach** was taken to **assess the Ideal’s characteristics**:

- 1) With **single** or **multiple choice** questions, author always took the **option with the biggest frequency** as the leading characteristic,
- 2) however **for traits** that included **more constituents**, **options with the second biggest frequency** were included in the ideal Lara’s repertoire **as well**, namely:
  - a. V1 – Lara’s social status,
  - b. V6 - Past & relationships,
  - c. V10 – Lara’s motives,
- 3) **means** were generated for questions which were designed as a **scale**. This included:
  - a. V 12 - Personality traits,
  - b. V 16 - Voice & expression,
  - c. V 17 - Talkativeness,
  - d. V 31 - Lara Croft, the icon,
  - e. and V 34 – Personality rank of each Lara iteration.

**Personality traits** were sorted from the most to the least preferred ones. To correspond with the table generated in the “Lara Croft as imagined by her developers” part, author picked **8 critical traits** of the Ideal Lara while including **15 positive traits in total** in accordance to the **mean break point of 4.0**. To include a counterweight, author also chose **5 no-go personality traits**, i.e. traits **with the lowest mean**.

**Pie chart** was generated directly from the results to display **shares** of each form of **voice & expression**. **Two** forms of expression had a visibly higher score than others and were **chosen as the critical ones**. Direct result for **talkativeness** was generated from **transferring the final mean to a percentage**.

The **grading method** utilized both **plus** and **minus points**, as depicted in Figure 6-98. For V1 to 31.9, matching the least preferred option in a question resulted in **-0.5 point reduction**, while **matching the most preferred option** brought the iteration **+1.5 points**. In V12, having a **significant no-go trait** meant **-1 point** reduction, while having a significant trait that was deemed crucial brought **+1.5 points**.

Figure 6-98: Grading logic for each Lara iteration

Legend	Points	Questions
Matches with critical trait	+1.5	V1 to V31.9
Matches with trait	+1	
Doesn't match with trait	0	
Matches with least preferred trait	-0.5	
Trait is significant	+1.5	V12
Trait is present	+1	
Trait is absent	0	
No-go trait	-0.5	
No-go trait is significant	-1	

The following **grading table** (Figure 6-99) was created to assess **similarity score** for each Lara Croft iteration, TRF's ideal being a measure for comparison.

Figure 6-99: The grading table with scores for each Lara iteration

Ideal Lara scoresheet												Max
Nr.	Question	TR-I	TR-II	TR-III	TR-TLR	TR-AoD	T- L	TR-A	TR-U	RotTR	Ideal Lara	
1	Social status	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	2,5	3	1,5	3	2,5	Adventurer/ Aristocrat/ Marginalised	3
2	Teamwork	1,5	1,5	1,5	1	-0,5	0	1,5	1	-0,5	No team	1,5
3	Dependence	1,5	1,5	1,5	1	-0,5	-0,5	1,5	1	-1	Independent	1,5
4	Help & trust	1	1	1	1,5	-0,5	-0,5	1	-0,5	-0,5	Shares problems, asks for advice	1,5
5	Stance towards authority	1,5	1	1,5	1,5	-0,5	-0,5	1,5	1	-0,5	Listens, decides on her own	1,5
6	Past & relationships	0	0	0	1	1	-0,5	1	-0,5	-0,5	Brief past/ Structured backstory	1,5
7	Lara's partner	1,5	1,5	1,5	0	-0,5	1,5	1,5	-0,5	-0,5	No partner	1,5
8	Partner relationship	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	No partner	1
9	Family	0	0	0	1	1	-0,5	-0,5	-0,5	-0,5	Mentioned in a backstory	1,5
10	Motives	1,5	3	1,5	0	-0,5	-0,5	1	-0,5	-0,5	Sportive/ Knowledge	3
11	Stance towards wealth	1,5	1,5	1,5	-0,5	-1	0	1,5	1,5	1	Shown being wealthy	1,5
14	Skill level	0	0	1,5	1,5	1,5	0	0	0	0	Semi-realistic	1,5
16	Voice & expression	5	2,5	5	3,5	3,5	2,5	3	3	2	<b>Irony/ Strong/</b> Joking/ Thoughtful	5
17	Talkativeness	1	0	0	1	0	-0,5	1	-0,5	-0,5	Occasional (46 %)	1
18	Self-control	1	1	1	1,5	1,5	-0,5	1,5	1	-0,5	Mildly emotional	<b>1,5</b>
19	Escape scene	1,5	-0,5	1	1	1,5	1,5	1	1,5	-0,5	Challenging	<b>1,5</b>
20	Escapes from a fight?	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	Yes	<b>1</b>
21	Shown being helpless	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	No	<b>1</b>
22	Injuries	-0,5	-0,5	1	-0,5	0	-0,5	-0,5	-0,5	-0,5	Gets injured, recovers quickly	<b>1</b>
23	Approach to danger	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,5	Tactical shooting	<b>1,5</b>
24	Murderer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Maybe	<b>1</b>
25	Kill when not necessary	1	0	1	0	0	1,5	1,5	0	0	Avoids, but kills for her quest	<b>1,5</b>
26	Swearing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,5	Overwhelming situations	<b>1,5</b>
27	Preferred weaponry	1	1	1	1	1,5	1	1,5	1,5	1	Combination (more ranged)	<b>1,5</b>
31.7	Sex as part of Lara's persona	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3 (medium)	<b>1</b>
31.9	Lara acts seductive	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3 (medium)	<b>1</b>

12	Lara's character	TR I	TR II	TR III	TR TLR	TR AoD	TR L	TR A	TR U	RotTR	Ideal Lara	
	Analytical	1	0	1	1	1,5	1	1	1	1	x	1
	Apologetic	0	0	0	0	0	-0,5	-0,5	0	-1	o	0
	Athletic	1,5	1,5	1	1	1	1,5	1,5	1	1	x	1,5
	Courageous	1,5	1,5	1,5	1,5	1	1	1	1	1	x	1,5
	Crafty	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	x	1
	Deadly	1,5	1	1,5	1,5	1,5	1	1,5	1,5	1	x	1,5
	Determined	1	1	1	1	1	1,5	1,5	1,5	1	x	1,5
	Doubtful	0	0	0	0	-0,5	-0,5	-0,5	0	-1	o	0
	Educated	1	0	1	1	0	1,5	1	1,5	1	x	1,5
	Eloquent & persuasive	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	x	1
	Globetrotting	1,5	1,5	1,5	0	1	1,5	1,5	1	1	x	1,5
	Gullible	0	0	-1	-0,5	-0,5	0	0	-0,5	-0,5	o	0
	Intelligent	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,5	1	x	1,5
	Mysterious	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	x	1
	Narcissistic/ self-absorbed	0	0	0	0	0	-0,5	0	0	0	o	0
	Observant	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	x	1
	Remorseful	0	0	0	0	0	-0,5	-1	0	-0,5	o	0
	Self-confident	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	x	1
	Skilled in languages	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	x	1,5
	Skilled with vehicles, mechanisms & tools	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	x	1

Results	TR I	TR II	TR III	TR-TLR	TR AoD	TR-L	TR-A	TR-U	RotTR
Summary of points	43.5	31.5	39.5	37.5	26	24.5	35.5	30.5	15
Position towards ideal Lara	1	5	2	3	7	8	4	6	9
Match with ideal Lara	71.90%	52.07%	65.29%	61.98%	42.98%	40.50%	58.68%	50.41%	24.79%

These **results** were **transformed into an infographic** that was then **posted on TRF** as a separate thread and can be seen in Figure 6-101.

It has to be noted that **description of each Lara Croft** was made **from** the extensive **cut-scene & artwork analysis**, but was **enhanced with** author's **personal opinion**. This was done **to** further **explain** the overall **positioning** of each Lara. Author saw it as an opportunity to **point out major differences** and traits that made each one special, stating possible advantages and disadvantages. However, these **intentionally critical** descriptions were **not taken into account when calculating the final score**. When the subjectivity of the rating was brought to attention, **author clarified his method with this following post** (Figure 6-100):



Figure had been removed from the digital version of this document, in accordance to ethical standards of Netnography, the research method.

Figure 6-100: Author clarifying the methodology



# The Ideal Lara Croft



Pictures by Poltro-Croft: <http://poltro-croft.com/art/TOMB-RAIDER-LARA-ACROSS-AGES/>

## I. Intro & thank you

The search for ideal Lara Croft is over! I generated aggregate **results from 144 members** who participated in the research questionnaire and **combined them with my complex research** of each Lara.

Bear in mind that these results are an outcome of me diving into an ocean of information. **I tried to be as objective as possible**, assessing scores for Lara's behaviour in (nearly) each TR title, completely depriving from how much I like each game. I was meditating over Lara's persona, both nitpicking in details and looking at the big picture. This concerned personality & behaviour, based on **tangible evidence from cut-scenes, artwork and box-art**. Without further ado, let's see the results.



## II. Lara's evolving persona

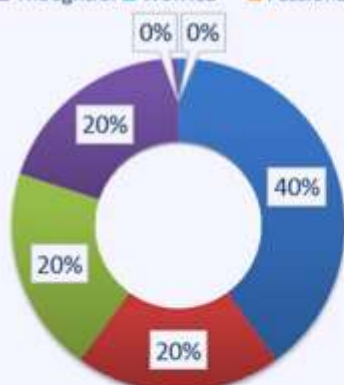
### TR-I: Core's core

Athletic, courageous, deadly, determined, educated, globetrotting, intelligent, mysterious, self-confident and skilled in languages. TR-I Lara set unshakeable core personality traits that were (to surprise of some) carried across nine titles up until the reboot.

As an adventurer and mercenary, Lara travels across the globe alone, as an independent woman with no team to consult her problems with, to satisfy her inner needs. She plays for sports, but decides to act heroic at the very end.

#### TR-I: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Irony ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
occasional  
(40%)

TR-I Lara emits patience and is very inquiring when dealing with her enemies, preferring joking and ironic tone of voice. At the same time, she stands strong, looks threatening and never lets her emotions show. Her cold-headedness is as spectacular as her superhero skills. TR-I Lara doesn't get injured, but escape scenes prove to be a challenge for her. She is never shown being helpless and escapes when the situation is dire.

When it comes to danger, TR-I Lara prefers direct gunfire, but uses stealth to outwit others. She guns down barriers that prevent her from reaching her goals. Whether she is a murderer is one big questionmark.

TR-I Lara formed the core personality of the brand and some of her traits have been preserved in heads of fans, although being absent in later titles. One example being Lara's carelessness and hostility. To deviate from core (design) meant to betray loyal fans, to undermine what Lara Croft stands for, which is important concerning the spot numero uno.

**71 % match with ideal Lara**





## TR-II: The silent force

TR-II Lara matches the original in many ways, never straying far from the blueprint. Unlike TR-I Lara, this iteration comes with purely adventuring status, looking to satisfy her inner needs, but also to search for knowledge. As long as motives go, TR-II Lara represents the community's ideal.

When it comes to receiving orders, TR-II Lara listens to no one's command, sharing a similarity with TR-U Lara, but her talkativeness is on the all time low. As tempting as it would be to call TR-I Lara mysterious, it is TR-II Lara who doesn't provide nearly any dialogue, but gives space to fill in the gaps with one's imagination. The downside to this would be absence of memorable quotes and stances to relate to.

For the first time, Lara is shown exhausted and falling unconscious after a difficult escape scene. She doesn't escape from a fight, neither she is shown helpless. TR-II Lara is prone to stealth just as TR-TLR, TR-AoD and RotTR Lara, but she never chooses it as a way of dealing with danger. She acts similarly strong as TR-A Lara, but never slides into a worried expression, making her the most deadly one.

Where TR-I Lara left space for interpretation. TR-II Lara cannot be seen as a sociopath, neither she is a murderer. In fact, we see her humane and even caring side as she gets concerned with wellbeing of others.

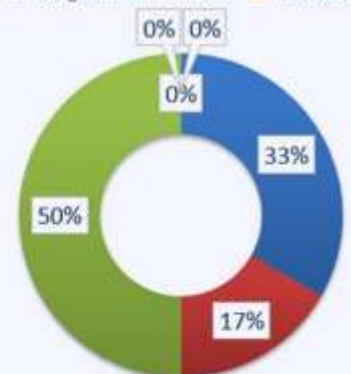
Although being equally spectacular and athletic, TR-II Lara partially lost her eloquency, analytical skills, education, language skills and sense for doing business and replaced them with increased level of sexiness and even seductive poses, all of that being present in the game's artwork.

New traits: Caring / Empathic / Formal & well mannered / Vulnerable (slow recovery) / Resilient (fast recovery) / Sultry & seductive / Tech-savvy



TR-II: Voice & expression

Joking Ironical Strong  
Thoughtful Worried Passionate



Talkativeness:  
rare  
(15%)



**51 % match with ideal Lara**





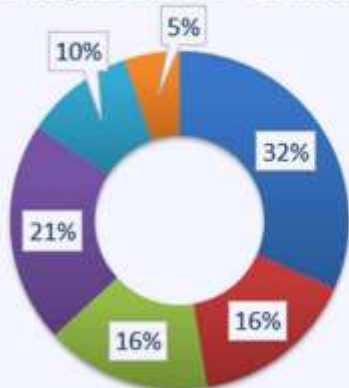
## TR-III: The Composed master of sarcasm

The biggest jokester in the party. TR-III Lara has a smaller share of joking expressions in her repertoire than TR-I Lara, but that's because she talks more often and in a more complex manner. She is the only classic Lara that shoots deliberate jokes in nearly every conversation : "You better watch...the bell." What is most impressive about TRIII-Lara is how ironic she is. During my inspection, I tried to catch ironic remarks and watch small nuances to give all Lara's points in the irony department, but only with TR-III Lara I had experienced irony in its true definition. Wheher she pokes fun of mutilation, or jokes about being eaten alive, TR-III Lara keeps her cool, but non-aggressively.

TR-III Lara is very patient, inquiring, eloquent & persuasive, but also very gullible! Lara puts her trust into strangers, which lefts her betrayed in the end. This was one of the no-go traits for TRF's ideal, yet the trait appeared from TR-III onwards!

### TR-III: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironic ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
often  
(57%)

Similarly to TR-I Lara, her status is of adventurer and mercenary, listening to other's command, but deciding on her own. Motives also stay true to the original, as she plays for sports, but switches to hero in the finale. Overall, TR-III Lara confirms that classic Lara is nowhere near selfish and maniacal. She puts her neck for humanity's safety, helps a wounded soldier, tries to make piece with one of her assassins and doesn't instantly kill a potential threat.

What was really interesting was how often she gets injured, in 36% of the cut-scenes, making her the most injured Lara when calculated towards the toal number of scenes available, but unlike RotTR Lara, she recovers instantly.

What is mildly disturbing however, is the final scene where Lara murders a (smiling) soldier. In that manner, she resembles TR-L and TR-A Lara. Like the latter and TR-II, TR-III Lara doesn't escape from a fight nor is shown being helpless. She is also a pro when it comes to vehicles.

It was for the first time in the series' history that Lara's family is mentioned in the background, but the mention is too brief to be taken into account. As for sexual content, the promotional material is the most sexual and seductive of all titles, to the point of looking mildly pornographic, which is against community's wish.

While watching TR-III footage, the first thing that popped into my mind, even though TR-III is my least favourite classic, was: "That's the Lara Croft I love. Ironic, confident and above it all," and truth be told, she takes the second spot when it comes to personality.

New traits: Crafty / Provocative & scathing / Relational (has family) / Homicidal / Gullible

**64 % match with ideal Lara**





## TR-IV: Angry mother Teresa

The first Tomb Raider to include cohesive storyline, singular setting and just as thoroughly designed Lara was TR-TLR. For the first time ever, Lara has history, she has roots and relationships to go with. Whether it be her connection to Verner, or Jean-Yves, Lara has a team, but still operates alone. Lara even admits exhaustion and asks for advice, making her somewhat dependant on others. She listens, but decides on her own.

As opposed to previous installments, there are no hints about Lara's wealth or aristocratic roots whatsoever. In the Last Revelation, she is a pure adventurer, and not only that, she is a hero! TLR Lara is the only Lara, out of them all, who goes adventuring based on purely heroic motives. She want's to fix what she messed up, to prevent a global disaster.

Lara's caring personality is brought to the all time high, as she cares for humanity, multiple wounded soldiers and for her friend Jean, for whom she storms to the rescue. Unlike TR-L Lara, this iteration is not driven by relationships, neither does she act overly emotional. It is a fine balance between deadly & angry, as the main form of TR-TLR Lara's expression, and good-hearted. The Last revelation Lara is mildly emotional, as opposed to the cold-headedness of previous versions. She even displays affection towards her dear friend.

Lara's heroic personality shows when she avoids murder by incapacitating opponents, often using stealth to do so. The cherry on top of the heroic cake would be Lara's incorruptibility. Also, being helpless and escaping is not an embarassment for this more humane Lara. Her skills seem more realistic as an effect, although she gets injured just once.

Just as in TR-U, this Lara is very teachable, educated and skilled in languages, which results in a very thoughtful expression. This is assisted with significant decline in sexy content.

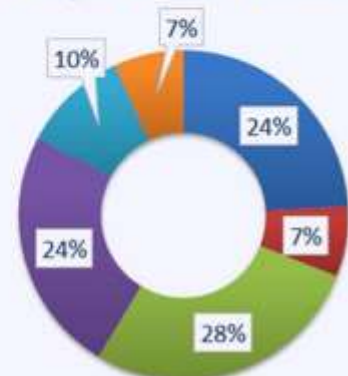
With no gadgets & wealth availalbe, TR-TLR Lara seems like the classic raider, similar to the likes of Indiana Jones, strong yet intelligent and also humane. And because of these balanced qualitties, she takes the third place.

New traits: Affectionate/ Careful / Incorruptible / Problem solving / Respectful / Wise / Worried



### TR-VI: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironic ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
occasional  
(39%)



**61 % match with ideal Lara**





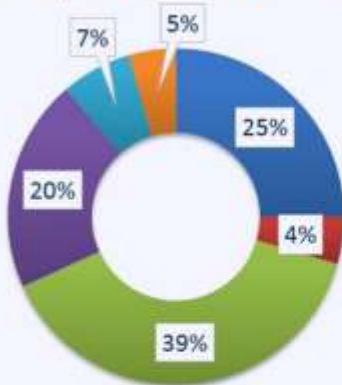
## TR-AoD: The wistful gangster

Marginalised and thrown to streets, AoD Lara has adapted for such environment with increased aggression and presentation void of her aristocratic heritage. Throughout the game, Lara threatens others like an A-class mobster, negotiating many business deals and acting competitive along the way. Although fitting to her strong persona, this behaviour makes her more dependant on others than ever before.

Lara operates in a team that goes exploring with her. Although being separated in terms of gameplay, Bouchard drives Lara to Verner's apartment, Luddick sniffs around the same building and provides Lara with evidence and Kurtis becomes a valid sidekick in the end. Delegation of tasks makes a premiere in AoD, as Lara splits work between her and Kurtis. This would be later recreated in both TR-L and TR-U. She takes a role of a task recipient as well.

### TR-AoD: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironic ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



**Talkativeness:**  
often  
(66%)

For the first time ever, Lara is driven by relationship motives, which is the least preferred option on TRF. This would set standard for each and every TR game to follow. Whether she tries to avenge Verner or clear her conscience, AoD Lara deals with a relational problem. Just like in TR-I and TR-II, she turns into a true hero in the end and proves to be just as incorruptible as her TR-TLR counterpart.

Being mildly emotional, AoD Lara introduced new expressions like doubt, nervousity and thankfulness. What is apparent from the artwork and in-game footage is how wistful and even tame AoD Lara is. This plays well with a new story element, romance. Lara has an apparent love interest. This relationship is a very subtle flirt that does not directly deteriorate her tough persona, even though the tameness and thoughtfulness during cut-scenes may be seen and felt through animation and music.

The semi-realistic skills from TR-TLR are preserved in AoD, materializing in Lara who escapes from a fight, is shown being helpless and even injured. The mysterious and calm attitude, nearly void of sexual content, is combined with stealth and escape tactics. These traits are shared with RotTR Lara who uses the same strategy to handle conflict, they are the only two iterations to do so.

Unlike any other Lara, AoD Lara is sceptic when it comes to supernatural. This is reinforced with her analytical and observant behaviour, yet again, fitting with her slightly introverted persona, which also makes her quite stubborn, to the point of acting defensive.

The changed setting and daring story required Lara's personality to be altered which created an inconsistency in the loyal fanbase when it came to her evaluation, she takes the seventh place.

New traits: Competitive / Cooperative / Defensive / Doesn't believe in supernatural / Doubting & confused / Emotional / Managerial / Melancholic & wistful / Nervous / Observational / Relationship motives / Stubborn / Tame / Thankful / Thoughtful & calm / Threatening

**42 % match with ideal Lara**





## TR-L: The labile, aristocratic model

Legend Lara is rich, beautiful and self-confident. She has a big manor, a butler, and a team that does work for her. Where AoD Lara split work to prevent a disaster, Legend Lara uses her riches & accompanying assets to make her life easier and more comfortable. When dealing with tasks, TR-L Lara delegates work on her teammates who provide a constant online support for her, plan business meetings or just pack her suitcases. She attends a posh party, dresses in one of her many outfits, rides a luxurious bike, uses helicopter and a private jet for transport. Unlike any other Lara, TR-L Lara seems to be concerned with her looks, which is reinforced with game's artwork, shiny graphics, make-up, in-game quotes and the extensive wardrobe.

Familial ties are Legend Lara's main motive for adventuring. Father's reputation seem to be very important to her, her mother's life even more. Legend and RoTR Lara share the same social status, but compared to the latter, Legend Lara seems more egocentric (a no-go trait of TRF). She is the only one whose ironic remarks and sarcasm end up sounding self-absorbed and rude. In combination with the previous paragraph, the whole image seems to be very close to a posh model. To her defense, Legend Lara stands next to the TR-I and TR-III Lara when it comes to mastering irony, a trait deemed crucial by the community.

The two previous characteristics are underlined with Legend Lara's emotional instability, worthy of a starving top model. TR-TLR Lara brought the first emotional elements to Lara's personality, AoD Lara's melancholic nature & angry tone of voice resulted in more composed expression, but Legend Lara constantly switches from joking & above it all attitude to doubts & regrets and even to an uncontrollable rage. From all Laras, Legend Lara is the most unstable one. On the other hand, bursts of positive energy can be felt as she expresses an undeniable passion for her job. When not in situations involving old and hurtful memories, Legend Lara creates a light and cheerful atmosphere, reminiscent of AAA superhero movies.

It is no coincidence, as her skills are on the same supernatural level. With classic Lara, Legend variation shares the same sense for grandiose entreés and exits. Like TR-I and TR-II Lara, Legend Lara does not get injured, but escapes prove to be challenging for her, just like for the original. Legend Lara never escapes from a fight, but is shown being helpless.

When it comes to conflict, this Lara prefers direct gunfire & assassination. She tries to avoid murder, but kills whatever stands between her and her quest, making her a community ideal in this manner. The same can be said about Lara's sex appeal, which is on a similar Level to TR-TLR.

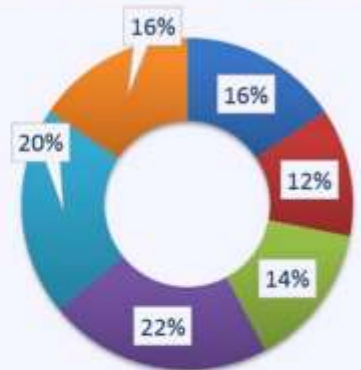
Overall, Legend Lara is still a believable recreation of the original, but hits a brick wall with family motives; heavy past & troubled mind; emotional instability; sentiments and narcissism; traits that are in a stark contrast with Core's Core.

New traits: Apologetic / Dependent / Dramatic / "Pretty face" / Forgiving / Frenzied / Impatient / Lighthearted / Narcissistic / Remorseful / Sentimental / Spoiled / Troubled mind / Uncompromising



TR-L: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironic ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
all the time  
(78%)



**40 % match with ideal Lara**





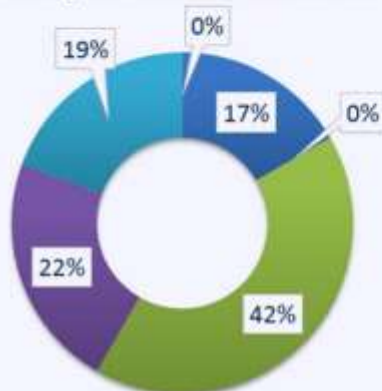
## TR-A: The remorseful brawler

Although being a re-imagined original, an independent mercenary adventurer, TR-A Lara inherited some of the contradictory traits from Legend Lara. Sportive and heroic motives are overshadowed by relationship ones, replacing the careless "play-for-fun" element for duties, past wrongs & sentiments. Lara's family is involved in the main story again and placed at the centre of attention, a pattern that started with TR-L and continued across Anniversary to TR-U and RoTR. Unlike the three, Anniversary keeps the past rather brief and less of a burden.

Just as the original, TR-A Lara has no team; is independent; doesn't share problems and listens to commands to decide on her own in the end. The difference lies in voice & expression. Anniversary Lara faces remorse from the very beginning, which undermines her confidence in every move she makes and plagues most of the dialogue. Apologetic nature, doubtful personality and remorseful expression hit three out of the five no-go personality traits chosen by TRF.

### TR-A: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironic ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
occasional  
(43%)

She is mildly emotional, but in no way soft. Anniversary Lara is the biggest brawler, outclassing any other Lara with superhero-like mele attacks and acrobatics. Concerning the weaponry and stance towards murder, Anniversary Lara stands for community's ideal, using guns and fists to get rid of obstacles. Just like TR-II and TR-III Lara, TR-A Lara is never portrayed helpless, neither she escapes from a fight. Just like TR-III Lara, escape scenes are piece of cake for her and she never gets injured, just like in TR-I, TR-TLR and TR-L.

Problems with TR-A Lara have their roots in TR-L, although the posh, self-absorbed, ever-talking and dependent aspects have been omitted. The badass attitude of the original is still present nevertheless, helping to position the re-imagined Lara on the fourth spot of the chart.

New traits: Conscientious / Conflicted / Brawler

**58 % match with ideal Lara**





## TR-U: Emotionally constipated history teacher

Where TR-I/II/III/TLR Lara combined irony with deadliness; TR-AoD Lara said empty threats to put others in a corner; TR-L Lara went suddenly angry from sunshine and lollipops; TR-A Lara sounded regretful while killing everybody in sight, TR-U Lara is either emotionless or psychotic, which makes her personality nearly one-sided, compared to the classic trilogy. Vast majority of dialogue is filled with history and mythology, presenting very little relatable content. Where TR-II Lara did not talk at all, TR-U Lara doesn't share anything of proper substance.

Underworld Lara acts stone cold even in situations that would be fitting for some emotions, which is preferred by community in small doses. When acting emotional, it is all anger and hatred. Passion has been eradicated, irony has vanished and took jokes with it. It's either an emotionless history lesson or an hateful fit. Due to these circumstances, Lara swears for the first time, but never at the level of RotTR. In TR-U Lara's defense, she is never a murderer and still cares for her dear one's.

What brings her closer to the ideal than Legend is her strenght, deadliness, undeniable intelligence, extensive language skills and relative independence. TR-U Lara has a team, but operates alone, having mere briefings before and after a mission. The exception would be her teamwork at the end of the game.

Motives are purely relational, just like in TR-L. The past is heavy and Lara's family is involved in the main story again. These are all non-preferred options on TRF and present a burden to Lara's character.

TR-U Lara never escapes from a fight, but even with her superhero skills, is shown being helpless, but never injured. The brawler attitude and direct confrontaion of TR-A Lara makes a comeback, but fits the overall image this time. Starting with TR-A, Lara has been stripped off from her sex appeal and cocky attitude. Being permanently angry did not help the situation either.

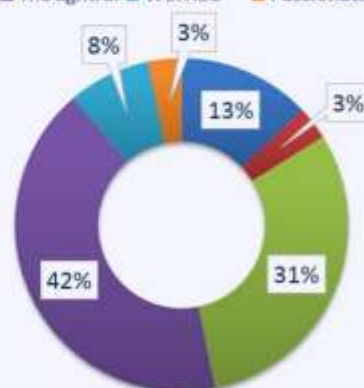
It is clearly visible how Crystal Dynamics tried to present more serious, physically and psychically exhausted Lara, with face covered in dirt and life shaken in its very foundations. A theme that would be fully used for RotTR Lara later on. Unfortunately, this took the fun factor from her adventures.

New traits: Self-reflective



TR-U: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Irony ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
often  
(70%)



**50 % match with ideal Lara**





## RotTR: The worried asthmatic with a passion

Put into extreme environment, RotTR Lara has to cope with nature to survive. She has been ostracized from society and needs to find a way to clear her father's name. Similarly to TR-L, RotTR Lara faces consequences of being high in the societal ladder, but this time, without enjoying her wealth for increased comfort. She is a marginalised survivor, motivated mainly by relationships and her heroic passion.

Coming back to TR-L, RotTR Lara exceeds the former in terms of passionate expression, but also in vulnerability, which has become her most prominent attitude and TRF's most unwelcomed option. Whether it be for her caring and friendly personality, which has been brought to a whole new level, or because of her decreased, more realistic skills, RotTR Lara feels troubled. A crucial component of Lara Croft's personality that had rapidly decreased with TR-A and TR-U has vanished completely. There is absolutely no irony, no real jokes and just a few moments where Lara acts "above it all." When combined with lowered capabilities, RotTR Lara feels nowhere as self-confident and grandiose as the original, especially with the breathy voice-over.

In fact, she hits four out of five no-go personality traits of the ideal, the most significant being apologetic and doubtful, the other two gullible and remorseful. This is caused by a fact that RotTR Lara is the most dependent Lara Croft to date. She is in a team that goes exploring with her, she listens to other's command and also delegates work on others. Apart from very few scenes, RotTR Lara is part of an interdependent group.

She escapes from a fight and is shown being helpless, get's injured and passes out, taking the second spot after TR-III Lara. Escape scenes are exhausting to her, which negatively affects her expression. Hopeless, sad, depressed, and scared are among new traits introduced in the title. This results in RotTR Lara swearing like never before, which is actually the community's choice.

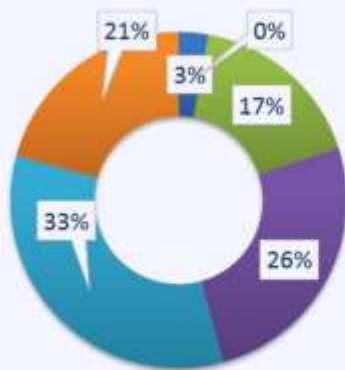
What is positive about RotTR Lara is her capacity to learn and self-improve. She is more humane, shows weakness and thus has the potential to be relatable. There is still a fair share of strong expression and she is more stubborn than ever before. But the weight of the storytelling keeps Lara sad and rarely smiling, just like in TR-U. The heavy relational ties and family involvement make the situation even worse.

Overall, the reboot continued what TR-U started, it tried to demonstrate Lara's strenght and resilience in a new manner, but ended up putting too much on her shoulders, which resulted in an exhausted character that suffers from chronic stress and depression.

New traits: Diplomatic / Follows authority / Friendly / Honourable / Hopeles / Obsessed / Sad & depressed / Scared / Survivor / Swearing / Avoids direct contact / Vulnerable & weak

### RotTR: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironical ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
all the time  
(83%)

**24 % match with ideal Lara**



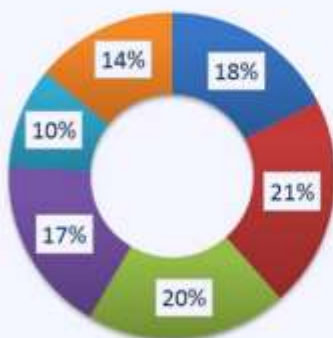


### III. TRF's Ideal Lara Croft



#### Ideal Lara: Voice & expression

■ Joking ■ Ironic ■ Strong  
■ Thoughtful ■ Worried ■ Passionate



Talkativeness:  
occasional  
(46%)

Lara Croft is an adventurer and aristocrat. She is shown being wealthy, however not much stress is put upon that information. Same thing applies to Lara's family and past. She has history and relationships associated with it, but it's all very brief and doesn't get in the way of Lara's true focus, adventuring!

Lara Croft plays for sports and knowledge. She is very determined, sets her mind towards the desired artefact and travels around the world to seize it. This requires her to be courageous to visit dangerous locations, athletic to overcome obstacles and observant to notice points of interests. Because of her secondary, yet as much as important motive, she is also very intelligent, educated in history & mythology and knows how to use surroundings for her advantage. Her analytical nature helps her to decompose current situation and deal with individual problems. Although not being completely ignorant to modern technologies, Lara feels most confident when using vehicles; interacting with ancient mechanisms and using various tools to facilitate her quest.

Lara is mysterious and tries to preserve this trait to her advantage, to outwit the opponent. Inquiring others to gain information while keeping herself shrouded in mystery works well for Lara and her quest. This is assisted with the fact that Lara is not gullible at all. When it's not necessary, Lara doesn't talk much. When she does however, she plays it on the light note, uttering memorable ironic remarks and causing some major burns. If things get heated up, Lara shows her deadly face, standing strong and confident before her adversaries.

This never transfers to a headless violence, because of her thoughtfulness and analytical mind. For most of the time, her confidence is projected through her sense for humor. If outnumbered, Lara escapes, which can be a bit challenging, but she never gets hopeless. When it comes to skill, Lara is a semi-superhero, boosting spectacular resistance, reflexes and agility, but she stays human and can get injured as well. Due to her resilience, she recovers quickly and continues unshaken.

When facing danger, Lara combines both mele and ranged combat, but never lets go of her pistols. She avoids murder, but if she decides to kill it is because of her determination. Lara prefers to tranquilize animals, but is undecided when it comes to human enemies. Whether she is a murderer is debatable, but rest assured, she never acts apologetic, neither she projects remorse and doubt. When she does something, it's an outcome of her decision, the best decision that was available at the moment.

Concerning decisions, Lara is independent and has no team or partner. She is not void of emotion and can even express passion or worries, but rarely. Swearing is also permitted, but in a very, very overwhelming situations, since she is a well mannered lady. If truly necessary, Lara turns to her closest friends and asks them for advice. She listens, but ultimately, decides on her own.

As a cherry on top, Lara is sexy and can even act seductive. Her sexuality is a mystery and not a very important factor, but the major consensus is that she simply doesn't have time to fulfill her (heterosexual) desires. All that is kept on a reasonable level, but is still part of her persona.

And that's, ladies and gentlemen, the ideal Lara Croft.



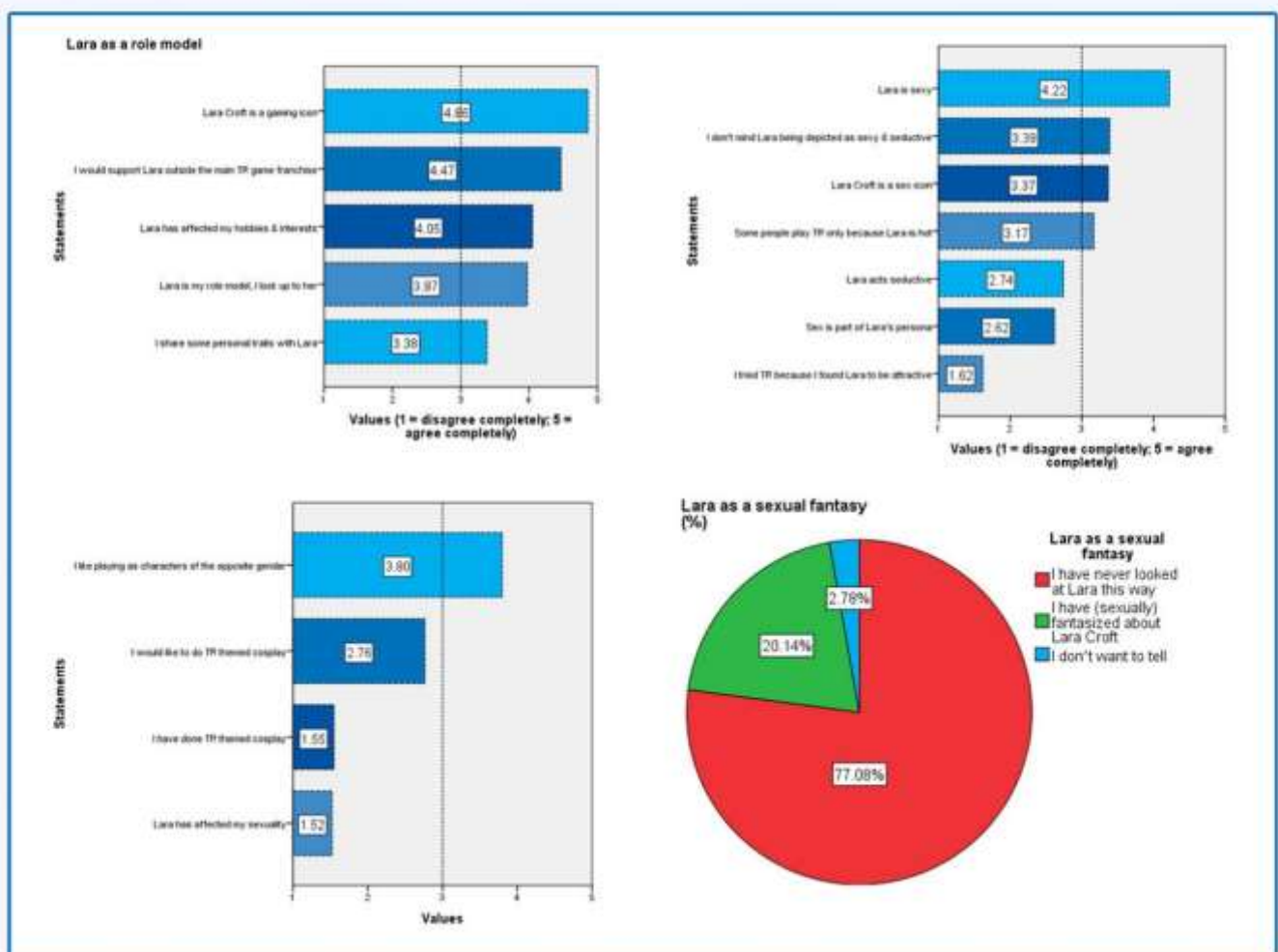
## IV. The summary table & relationship implications

TR	TRF's preference (1 = most favourite; 9 = least favourite)				
	Indirect grade	Relative grade	Popularity gauge	Most favourite	Least favourite
	(The lowest bias)	(Medium bias)	(The biggest bias)	(The biggest bias)	(The biggest bias)
TR-I		1		2	3
TR-II		5		5	7
TR-III		2		4	4
TR-TLR		3		3	2
TR-AoD		7		1	1
TR-L		8		6	5
TR-A		4		7	9
TR-U		6		8	8
RotTR		9		9	6

It can be seen that popularity analysis of each Lara Croft variation yielded different results depending on method used. The indirect grade was a result of the main, content research, while relative grade came from a questionnaire question where members graded each Lara in relation to others. The third, most biased preference came from differences between the most and least favourite Lara. Author speculates that members did pick their favourite Lara but also the game itself.

1) **AoD** got chosen as both the most favourite and the second least favourite variation of Lara. This was a clear showcase of **brand love**. **Brand loyalists actively defended Core's last title no matter its flaws**. In fact, the **support seemed to get bigger the more critical general public got**. This conclusion was visible both from questionnaire's results and netnographical analysis of the forum. It also marked the first major **split in the community**, since the results were so polarized.

But the point lies in the impressive relationship potential of the original heroine. Even though she had changed with each title, the **core was so well established** that some characteristics **survived across many installments**, although not being mentioned or even contradicted later on. The "iconic" results of peripheral questions spoke for themselves.





2) The second relational aspect would be the low grade of **TR-A** Lara. **Deviating from few core values** and **trying to "replace" the "one and only original"** resulted in low direct and relative preferences, while objectively scoring high. **Touching the fans' holy grail** and trying to alter it was a **bad idea** and resulted in a backlash. Nuclear values were identified in the research and should be preserved in the future to make fans happy.

3) The third relational conclusion concerns the positioning of **TR-II** Lara. **Void of any proper in-game quotes to connect with**, nobody chose her as their least favourite, but at the same time, nobody picked her as their most favourite either. It is **crucial** for Lara to talk (occasionally) and **to provide something relatable for the intrinsic linkage**, but it must **not** be as **heavy, complicated and negative** as it had become in TR-U and RotTR. TR-TLR level of complicated would be just right.

4) The fourth conclusion is that **TRF community agreed on one thing: RotTR Lara deviates from the established brand too much**. As history showed, **only loyal fans support the brand no matter what**. If new Lara doesn't have the **proper relationship potential**, it may happen that **sales will deteriorate in the long run, once the novelty factor of gameplay and graphics is gone**. It is also **much more expensive** to attract new customers and keep the same level of AAA quality that attracts these masses, who are not that loyal to defend the brand in the time of need and to proudly make it part of their own personality, an icon to aspire to, as it is with the existing fanbase.

Recalling my thesis, bombastic sales of Nintendo Wii come to my mind, with the sudden fall to sales of Wii-U. It is necessary to **get rid off no-go personality traits** in reboot Lara's behaviour and to dispose the **ones that are contradictory to Lara's core persona**. This would reconstruct the bridge between fans and the brand, through relatable brand values. The second option being starting anew, with new brand values and community.

#### V12 - TOP 15 personality traits of Ms Croft

TOP 15 personality traits

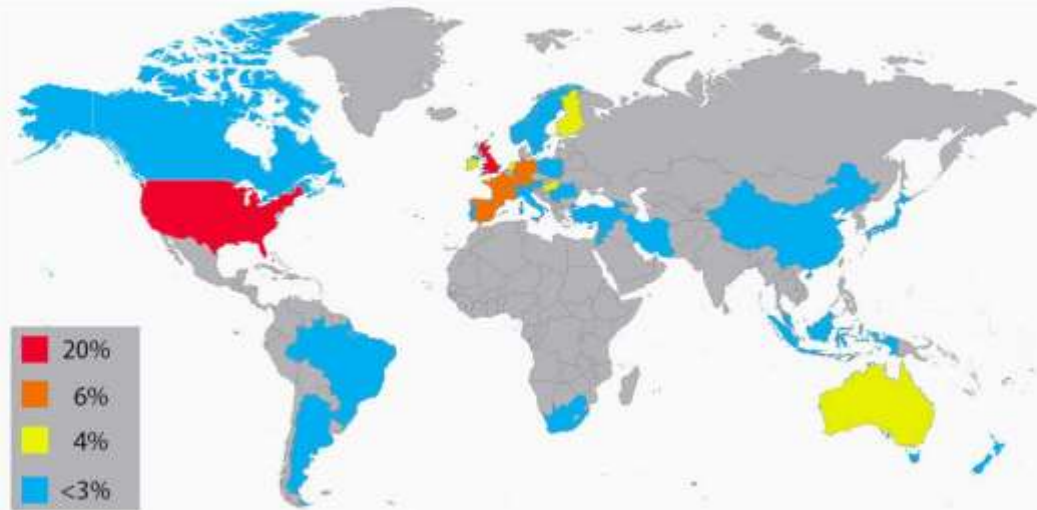
	N	Mean
Intelligent	144	4,94
Determined	144	4,90
Globetrotting (traveller)	144	4,88
Educated (in history & mythology)	144	4,84
Athletic	144	4,81
Courageous	144	4,76
Skilled in languages	144	4,69
Deadly (dangerous)	144	4,69
Self-confident	144	4,60
Observant (looks around & notice)	144	4,57
Eloquent & persuasive (knows how to talk and convince)	144	4,57
Skilled with vehicles, mechanisms & tools	144	4,53
Analytical	144	4,44
Crafty (can use surroundings for her advantage)	144	4,42
Mysterious	144	4,18

#### V12 - TOP 5 no-go personality traits

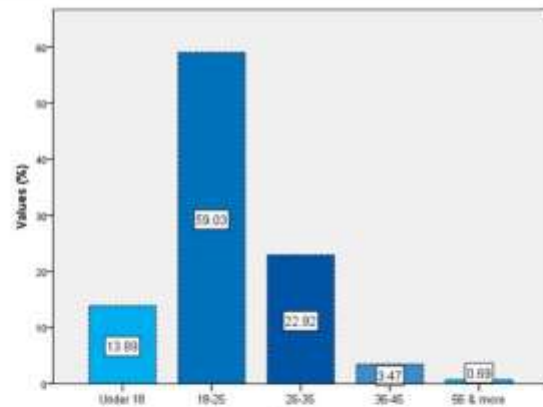
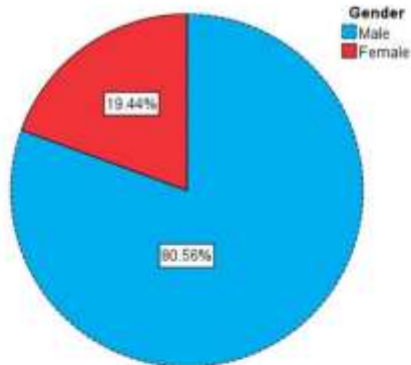
TOP 5 no-go personality traits

	N	Mean
Gullible (trusts other people)	144	2,01
Doubtful	144	2,08
Apologetic	144	2,19
Remorseful (regrets her actions)	144	2,33
Narcissistic & self-absorbed	144	2,43

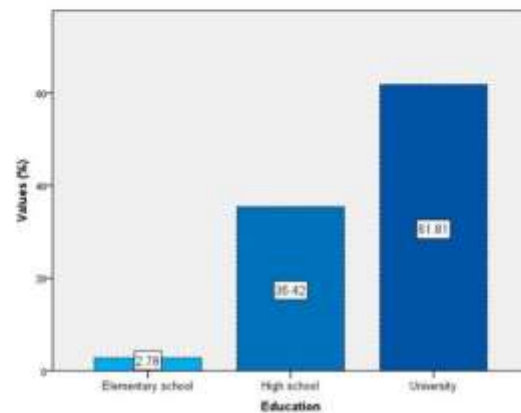
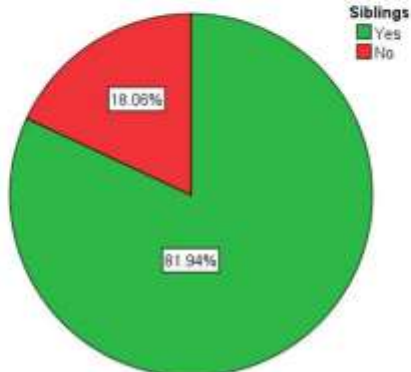
## V. Forum statistics



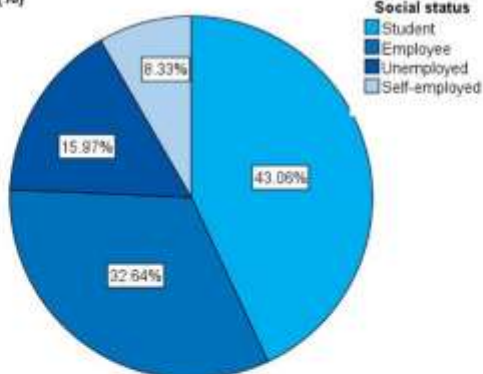
Gender (%)



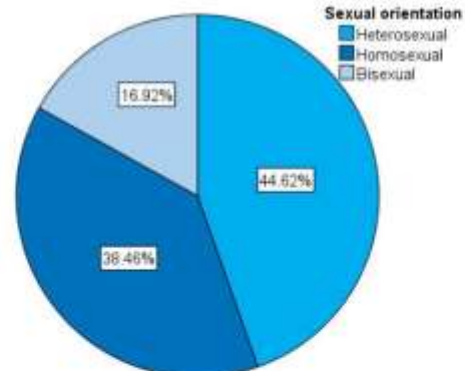
Siblings (%)



Social status (%)



Sexual orientation (%)

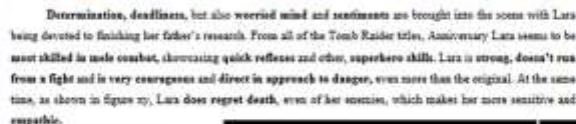


**Thank you for your help  
TRF!**



1

● ● ● ●



Twice in one dialogue, Lara threatens one of the locals to get the information she needs. She uses *fear* to reach her goals. In the following interrogations however, Lara seems to settle for less information and does not seem to act aggressive, although putting some pressure on the interrogated subjects. *Ironical tone of voice* and *straightforwardness* are preserved, although being *more serious* and *threatening*.

Lara Croft is an adventurer and aristocrat. She is shown being wealthy however not much stress is put upon that information. Same thing applies to Lara's family and past. She has history and relationships associated with it but it's all very brief and doesn't get in the way of Lara's true focus: adventuring!

Lara Croft plays for sports and knowledge. She is very determined, sets her mind towards the desired artefact and travels around the world to seize it. This requires her to be courageous to visit dangerous locations, athletic to overcome obstacles and observant to notice points of interests. Because of her secondary, yet as much as important motive, she is also very intelligent educated in history & mythology and knows how to use surroundings for her advantage. Her analytical nature helps her to decompose current situation and deal with individual problems. Although not being completely ignorant to modern technologies, Lara feels most confident when using vehicles.

• • • • •

The grading method utilized both plus and minus points, as depicted in Figure 40. For U1 to U18, matching the least preferred option in a question resulted in 0.5 point reduction, while matching a the most preferred option brought the iteration +1.5 points. In U19, having a significant no-go trait meant -1 point reduction, while having a significant trait that was deemed crucial brought +3.5 points.

Legend	Points	Questions
Matches with critical trait	+1.5	VI & VIIA
Matches with trait	+1	
Doesn't match with trait	0	
Matches with least preferred trait	-1.5	
Trait is significant	+0.5	VII
Trait is present	+1	
Trait is absent	-1	
No-go trait	-2	
No trait is significant	0	

## 2

Question	Y18	Y19	Y20	Y21	Y22	Y23	Y24	Y25
Start status	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry	Student/Ministry
Teamwork	No team	No team	No team	In a team, supporting each other	In a team, supporting each other	No team	In a team, supporting each other	In a team, supporting each other
Dependence	Independent	Independent	Independent	Dependent	Dependent	Independent	Dependent	Very dependent
Only I want	Don't share problems, problems, decide for her own	Don't share problems, problems, decide for her own	Don't share problems, problems, decide for her own	Share problems, decide with others	Share problems, decide with others	Don't share problems, problems, decide for her own	Share problems, decide with others	Share problems, decide with others
Share needs authority	No	No	No	Yes, command of a team	Yes, command of a team	No	Yes, command of a team	Yes, command of a team
Real & leadership	No part	No part	No part	Structured leadership	Structured leadership	No part	Structured leadership	No part
Very power	Strong	Strong	Strong	Very strong	Very strong	Strong	Strong	Very strong

## 3

**Relationships, social status & role of Ms Croft**

Laro's social status (pick up to three options) \*

- ☐ Aristocrat
- ☐ Adventurer & archaeologist
- ☐ Marginalised & rebel
- ☐ Mercenary
- ☐ Survivor

## 4

**Figure 1: Treatment preferences for women and men.**

**Left Chart: Women (N=100)**

Treatment	Percentage (%)
Observation & self-testing	80.0
Observation	16.7
Observation & self-test	13.3
Excision	9.0
Menopausal	1.0

**Right Chart: Men (N=100)**

Treatment	Percentage (%)
No treatment, just follow	93.3
Low-risk HPV test, but follow if it says that low-risk HPV is not a reason that requires follow-up	5.0
Excision	1.0
Observation	1.0

## 7

## Rank based on match with the ideal

Test	TH I	TH II	TH III	TH L.B	TH A.O	TH L	Asymmetry	TH C	RoTH
Summary of points	43,5	31,5	39,5	37,5	26	24,5	35,5	30,5	15
Position towards Ideal Lara	1	5	2	3	7	8	6	6	9
Match with ideal Lara	71,90%	82,07%	89,29%	91,98%	82,00%	82,42%	88,62%	92,42%	74,79%

Similarly to TR-I Lara, her status is of adventurer and mercenary, listening to other's command, but deciding on her own. Motives also stay true to the original, as she plays for sports, but switches to hero in the finale. Overall, TR-III Lara confirms that classic Lara is nowhere near selfish and maniacal. She puts her neck for humanity's safety, helps a wounded soldier, tries to make peace with one of her assassins and doesn't instantly kill a potential threat.

While watching *TR-III* footage, the first thing that popped into my mind, even though *TR-III* is my least favourite classic, was: "That's the Lara Croft I love. Ironic, confident and above it all," and truth be told, she takes the second spot when it comes to personality.

**Figure 6-101: The final infographic with research results**

Commenting further on these results, it can be seen that the forum indeed consisted of **mainly male audience of varying sexuality**, who were **students and employees** with **university or high school education** from **18 -35 years** of age, with **homeland** in the US, or **Europe**. **Brand** had an **international appeal** and had **matured** with its audience. This is a **positive information for brand owners**, as the Tomb Raider franchise is **supported by intelligent audience** in their **productive age**. This also opens doors to **marketing** activities focused on the **series' heritage**, such as game **re-masters, ports, or sequels**. Or even **spin-offs**, as Lara would get **supported** by the community even **outside the main title**.

The **brand knowledge** is **vast**, the **fans own the brand** and **know exactly how it should look like**. TRF knew the series so thoroughly that they still **remembered brand's core values** that were set 20 years ago, but abandoned or put into the background with each game. **Lara** is the central **totem** that is **worshipped** by the community, she boost the **relatable content, values** that can work on both **extrinsic** and **intrinsic level**.

For **intrinsic values**, TRF members connect with one of the many personality traits of Lara Croft. Traits prominent in the game inspection appeared as priorities in questionnaire's results. **Lara Croft** has a set of **unshakeable core-values** that users connect with. Members **feel affected** by Lara in terms of **hobbies and interests**, they **look up to her as a role model**. Lara Croft is a mean for creating one's personality, or set the desirable one. **Defying core values** in new titles means to **crush the bridge between the brand and individual's personality**. Any **contradictory values and omission of core values** **weaken** the brand, but it is **contradictory values to the brand's core** that **destroy** it.

The **extrinsic value** can be seen as well. Although the general stance towards cosplay is mediocre, members saw Lara as a **gaming** and a **sex icon**, as a personality worth the global popularity. In this manner, **Lara's sex and gaming appeal** could be cleverly used for **marketing**, but only in **reasonable doses**. This would all serve the need for **visible association with the brand**. Seeing that the top trait for **Lara** is **intelligent, athletic, globetrotting, and crafty** and that the majority of the community are still students, it would be reasonable to focus on some merchandising that concerns **school supplies, sport supplements, tech gadgets** or **travelling equipment**. It would fit both brand's core values and characteristics of the audience. The rest of the relational findings have already been mentioned in the infographics.

## 6.5 Integration: recommendations

The following paragraphs stand for recommendations based on the analysed content, aimed at individual parties involved with the franchise.

### 6.5.1 Crystal Dynamics & Square Enix

**Tomb Raider brand** has been **treated with the utmost care** since its handover to Crystal Dynamics. Author has discovered that Lara's core persona and the **serie's heritage** have been **preserved** along with the relationships created in the past. The developers are well aware of the **brand's big relationship potential** and **legacy**, but author would like to present his **8 recommendations** nonetheless.

The first recommendation would be aimed directly at the serie's main protagonist Lara Croft. Crystal Dynamics can **use the results of this diploma thesis** to have a **broad overview over the personality & behaviour of Lara Croft**. Although combined with subjective points of view, coming from qualitative methods used, author sees the results as fairly accurate and matching the portrayal of the heroine across various media. Spending hours and hours with the material and the franchise overall resulted in a detailed insight that revealed **approximate positioning of each Lara iteration** and **advantages/ disadvantages that came with each**. The **Ideal Lara Croft construct** would represent the **core** of the brand that needs to be preserved to **ensure brand consistency**. Although the research also revealed that **certain trait omissions** and even **contradictory traits** are an interesting **possibility**, **deviating from** the most important **core values** can cause **fanbase fragmentation**.

The **secondary recommendation** would reflect this finding and is aimed at **rebooted Lara Croft**. Her persona **deviates from the core** too much and is **causing displease among the loyal fanbase**. Not only that, results even revealed **discrepancy between any given Lara iteration and the ideal**. **Ideal Lara Croft has not been constructed yet**, which means that there is still a manoeuvring space for improvements. **TRF demonstrated brand ownership by knowing how Ideal Lara should look like**. Their conclusive model was a **fine remix of old and new**. This all leads to three possible scenarios concerning the Lara Croft brand:

- 1) Conduct a **research to assess reboot Lara's relationship potential**. Identify **new core values** of the brand that have intrinsic & extrinsic value and **intensify them** in the **next installment & marketing campaign**. This could result in losses of loyal



fans, but could **create new loyal**s as well. It would also require the **study to be extended beyond classic communities** like TRF,

- 2) execute a **secondary research** about preferred **game features of TR** and **combine** them **with the Ideal Lara Croft model** to **create a classic TR game** to **please the loyal fanbase** who have matured alongside it and who can be **marketed with nostalgia** in mind. Concerning the popularity of retro gaming and the current age and occupation of loyal fans, i.e. **educated people in their most productive years**, this would be a rentable mix,
- 3) or combine the first two options to **create a compromise**. **Remove the no-go** personality **traits from reboot Lara**, **re-introduce traits deemed crucial** by the loyal fanbase while **adding positively received values** that may have created a linkage between the reboot character and new customers.

Third conclusion would be **to acknowledge the serie's heritage**. This has been actually followed by Crystal Dynamics since the release of their first TR game and is currently about to be repeated with the release of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of RotTR. The idea is to **remix old with new**, to include content from **previous titles** in new releases. Whether it will be in a form of a usable **costume** for Lara, **music** tracks & sound effects, **character re-appearances**, or in a shape of hidden in-game **easter eggs**, the brand has a vast **lore** that can be used and **quoted** in the game's storyline. The **knowledge of the brand is great** and **appreciation of each title is still present** in the classic community that's TRF. It also **reinforces the unity of the franchise**; the community itself and is a simple tool to **make loyal fans happy** and **newcomers introduced** to the serie's **heritage**.

Fourth recommendation does not stray far from the third. As revealed in the research, community likes to **play & customize** their **gameplay experience**. The **modding scene** surrounding TR is unmistakable. A mere **3D model posing programme** has become a successful **tool for engagement** with the brand. An **outfit editor** or intuitive **level editor** would make loyal fans shiver with excitement. This also generates **free content** that's often on a **representative level** and has a potential to be used as a **material for official promotion**. Fans willingly engage in the process of **co-creation**, invest their free time and effort to produce something of value and, if acknowledged, **deepen their relationship** with the brand. This would extend the social potential of the game as well, as **an in-game system of level/costume sharing** would connect fans all over the globe and generate **extra hours of gameplay** to the base product (**increasing the product's value**) **without relying on** the generic **open world**

**format.** Fans also seem to enjoy **hijacking** the brand to customize it, which goes hand in hand with these tools. This finding **combines with the previous insight** perfectly. No doubt would fans try to **re-create past content, customize their experience** and **share the nostalgia** with others.

These engagement tools & platforms bring author to the fifth recommendation, to **preserve the brand ambassador.** Although being studied solely on TRF, author thinks that **Meagan Marie** is a good example of a **fitting link between the brand and the fanbase.** Well done content, created through tools provided, could reach developers and **keep them in touch with how the brand is perceived.** Existence of such liaison also **demonstrates interest** of developers towards their customers, an aspect that has been doubted by TRF community a couple of times. **Asking for input, no matter how small the impact of it would become,** is crucial to preserve the loyalty and engagement. **Acknowledging fan sites** and **individual creators motivates** these groups and subjects to continue with their passionate involvement and **intensifies the online presence** of the franchise. It is of essence to praise publically, to **give credit where it's due** and to reward when the output is of value.

The sixth recommendation is concerned with **market mevenism** and **social media.** TRF members were willing to use their personal social media accounts to promote anything related to the brand, whether it was a trailer, merchandise or a questionnaire. Square Enix could react to this with an **entertaining online campaign** that would include **content sharing.** Given the forum's **creativity,** it would be even possible to start a **video/picture-centric campaign** that would enable fans to **express their love** for the brand **publicly.** It would be necessary to **balance** the amount of **personal/customized** content and **brand-related/promotional** material. For example, a campaign that would appreciate one of Lara's many positive personality traits could use images and footage moderated by publishers, but would require users' engagement when picking the specific, close-to-the-heart trait and writing a customized message, as a homage to Lara. This would work on **both intrinsic** (shared values) **and extrinsic level** ("proud TR fan"), and since TR is such a legendary brand, more gamers could join. TRF members also seemed to **appreciate** any **marketing** materials released officialy, including **merchandise.** Sending **test copies of products to selected mavens** would deepen the relationship with the brand and would produce spontaneous **reviews** that **curate the content** to other members. It raises awareness, reduces purchase risk and serves as a **credible source** of information, especially on the forum platform where selected members are well established. It is important to facilitate rather than to force.

Eight recommendation is placed as a reaction to **Lara Croft's appeal to minorities**. This finding would have to be researched further to confirm its global validity, but in accordance to author's results, Lara Croft is an **LGBT idol**. It would be possible to incorporate this aspect to the game's **story**, for example in a form of a **side character**. However, it is important to keep in mind that **Lara's sexuality should go unmentioned**, as it is part of her core persona! It is also crucial **not to exploit this topic**, not to make it over the top and standing in a way of the true focus, adventuring. Much better approach would be to simply include an LGBT character as one of Lara's friends and keep the information about his/her sexuality as a nearly unnoticeable **background information**. This would put Lara in a position of an **LGBT ally**, but would not break her core persona or make some gamers angry since the information would be subtle and not pushed down anybody's throat, like it's done in many contemporary, cultural products.

The **final** recommendation is rather an **idea** and a **double edged sword as well**. **Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness** marked the first major **split in the community** and an important event in the franchise's history. AoD Lara is the last Lara created by the original developer and, as such, holds a **special spot in TRF's mindscape**. Whether this is a shared stance across the base of loyal fans could not be confirmed due to the research's scope, but it's an idea worth exploring. To **re-create or to make a sequel** to AoD would mean to **pay respects to Core Design**, the original developer, and to **remove the bitter taste** that was left in fans' mouths after the **game was left in an incomplete state, never fulfilling its true potential**. Crystal Dynamics would have to be **extremely careful** when re-creating the game, or making a sequel to it. The ideal would probably be to **base the majority of content on the original** and to **expand** it with **what had been cut from the concept**, not altering Lara's persona or the overall atmosphere in any way. This would be a dull process for creators, who would not be able to make any major changes, but **inviting** some of the **original creators** and story writers to the production process would partially **shield the, possibly altered, output from doubts**, and would make "AoD activists" happy. The old and the new would be fused into one, one team, one franchise, and one community. Due to AoD's infamous reputation, this would spark the attention of video gaming media and would **generate publicity**. Popular comparison videos would be made, memories would be shared and **serie's long-heritage** would be **highlighted**. But being a double edged sword, an AoD remake not faithful to the original would do the exact opposite, which is a big risk that would have to be considered.

### 6.5.2 TombRaiderForums.com

TRF was an **impressive platform** for the process of socialization. However, its **complexity** is also its weakness. Although being aware of the forum's structure from previous interaction, author still had **problems navigating through** the layered architecture of it. Engaging sub-forums such as competitions, XNA Lara and fan-art seemed to be hidden from the spotlight. A simple **forum map**, posted on the landing page, **or a system of icons** would signal the gamut of activities that can be joined on the forum. An alternative would be to **highlight some of the threads that require community's engagement** the most, like the "post a magazine scan for Lara's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday" thread, created by Meagan Marie, the community manager.

Similarly to this, it would be a good idea to include **links to associated webs**, such as **TombRaiderChronicles.com** and the **Facebook, YouTube and Twitter** accounts tied to it. The TRC web is of great quality and provides even the biggest fans with less known and rare content. Considering the scope of engaging activities that keep TRF members tied to the platform, there is no need to keep it hidden.

Speaking of invisible, the section dedicated for **social groups** seemed rather redundant. Members joined each sub-group as a sign of an **extrinsic linkage** based on the opinion shared or topic discussed. A simple **system of badges**, displayed in each **user's profile page** or selectable as an **accessory to one's avatar** would **project their affiliation** more visibly.

The third recommendation is also connected to the **customization process**. Although members can select their own avatar, signature and place they currently find themselves in, there is still space for a **username change**. 14 % of the userbase are under 18 years of age, 59 % of them are younger than 25. To give an option for customization would mean to **address the evolution of individual's networked self** next to the natural process of growing up. If some technical or community oriented limitations are preventing such measures, the intensity of such customization could be lowered with **time limitations**, or **ghost usernames** displayed temporarily underneath the newly selected nick.

**Some customization options** could be treated in a **premium** manner and tied to the donation system. The **option to donate money** to support TRF **should be made visible**. Thread that informs users of such option is buried underneath the big amount of content on the site, although being permanently positioned on top of the General chat sub-forum thread list. Instead

of informing users about “update on Tomb Raider Forums donator ranks and perks” the thread should be labelled along the lines of: “**Support TRF with a donation**” or “**Donate & become a gold member.**” Some members have been on the forum for more than 10 years and there is a potential to raise funds from their long-term engagement. To give a **counter value**, TRF could give those members an option to **customize the rank received** after the donation along with the **colour of their user name**.

Lastly, owner of the forum loses money because of the **ad-blocking add-ons** in members’ internet browsers. **Since ads** on TRF **are** absolutely **subtle** and **non-invasive**, a simple “**please turn of your ad-blocking plug in to support TRF**” **message** would convince the uninformed, yet supportive members to add an exception to their add-blocking software.

### 6.5.3 Video game focused netnographies

All netnographers should **act respectful** towards the brand studied. Author found out that **posting criticism**, no matter how objectivized it may be, can prove to be **problematic**. **Loyal customers** seem to **internalize the brand** to the point that **any attack on the brand** is perceived as an **attack on themselves**. This revelation perfectly corresponds with the relationship marketing theory and should be taken into account when dealing with brand research. Author recommends to **either share the complete input data** the conclusion had been based on, or to **keep critical parts** of the conclusion published **in the background, as a downloadable file**, in favour of positive findings that can be posted directly on the community’s online space, for example in a shape of infographics.

Second recommendation is focused on the **community rules**. Netnographer should **assimilate with** all active measures that form the community’s behaviour. A post that violates such rules can be taken down, along with the hello effect it could possibly have. This includes breaching the limit for **image size**, choosing the **wrong hosting** for content, posting **explicit material**, violating the **privileges** assessed to a current **user rank** or simply choosing the **wrong section of the site** to share information in. This kind of behaviour deepens the invader status of the researcher even more, which is not a good thing. Although author did not face such problems, he did realize these aspects along the research’s execution and deemed them important enough to be shared.

What he did faced was the problem of **sensitive topics**. Netnographer should be **careful** when dealing with themes like sexuality. Mere **lack of options** in a **questionnaire** or **wrongly**



**formulated sentence** have a potential to **offend** and **shift attention** to the problematics instead of the studied area. Author was lucky enough to deal with a community that politely pointed out the shared questionnaire's shortcomings, which brings author to the next advice, **test the questionnaire** before sharing it with a wider audience.

The last advice can be applied to any artefact of popular culture, such as **books, movies** and **video games**. **Don't spoil the content!** This can **enrage fans** of the brand who have not experienced the discussed material yet, and rightfully so.

Concerning any **gaming franchise** that is about to be **re-booted** or **re-imagined**, author would suggest to **execute two studies**. The **first** focused on the **story** and **characters**, analysing the personality & behavioral **traits, expression, motivations** and **themes** touched by main protagonists in the game's story. The **second** one focused on **gameplay mechanics & modes, music & sound effects, graphics, level design** and so on. **Further game focused research** could be applied to the **Tomb Raider franchise** to identify the **ideal game** the Ideal Lara Croft inhabits.

## 7 Conclusion

Tomb Raider and Lara Croft are well established brands on the video game market. The core brand values were set with the first game and have managed to survive for 20 years. The community that appreciates these values flourishes across many social media, creating content of all shapes and sizes. Whether it be artwork, videos, fan fiction or cosplay, fans of the franchise circulate around the iconic character of Lara Croft and appreciate her for the strong & inspiring persona she is. It is up to Crytal Dynamics, the game's developer, to fertilize and reap the fruit of fan's creativity and engagement.

The socialization process on TombRaiderForums.com, a social media dedicated to the franchise, chosen for this netnographical research, offers an admirable level of depth and scope. TRF users connect with each other in a very inviting and well mannered environment to dissect their beloved brand from every perspective, sharing officially released and unreleased content associated with the brand. Commercials, trailers, interwievs, magazines, artwork, music, story concepts and demo versions of games are posted, sorted, and passionately discussed among members. The forum's archival function lies in the database, but also in the heads of its members. The knowledge of the brand goes way beyond what could have been seen or heard in games themselves.

It's all much focused, but members also use the option to consocialize about whichever topic they want to. Although being networked individuals, hidden behind a veil of anonymity and carefully disclosed with avatars and signatures, members also discuss serious topics and confine with personal stories to show each other support, or to seek it. The collective constantly watches over rules imposed upon them and makes sure that no one misbehaves, making TRF suitable for socialization and even for enterpreneurial activities.

When given proper platform and tools, the fanbase is impressively imaginative and creates artefacts of representative quality. Studying TombRaiderForums.com, author discovered how engaging the series and the main protagonist are. TRF is a well organized online space, hyving with intelligent, skilled and creative invidiuals who spontaneously produce value for the brand. The community plays with the brand's assets, remixes old materials with new to create entertainment content for their peers. Not only that, TRF creates original content as well. Whatever the source, the output created makes the brand more enjoyable, it preserves and even expands its functionality. Flaws are removed with patches, functionality altered with

modifications and content altered for purposes of customization. All done in user's free time, from undeniable brand love.

Lara Croft is seen as a gaming icon, as a brand that has the potential to be viable even outside the core franchise. Lara has affected hobbies & interests of the community, she is a role model for many and fans feel connected to the values she stands for. TRF members know who Lara Croft is, they react to core features which were set at the time of series' inception, but have also created their own concept of the heroine. Results of the research revealed that the ideal Lara Croft is still to be created and that Crystal Dynamics, as the game's developer, has a maneuvering space to do so. Loyal fans on TRF own the brand, they know what traits are suitable for Lara and which are not. The 70% match of the ideal with the original Lara proved that these fans are able to collectively point out core features in a sea of choices.

The relatively consistent positioning of each Lara through direct and indirect choice demonstrated how sincere and well-founded the criticism is towards each iteration, but it also confirmed a relationship issue. The community is split more than ever before due to the serie's reboot. Although this finding cannot be applied to the whole fanbase because of the research's scope, it is an apparent problem on TRF. The change of game's developers also caused alterations to Lara's persona, undermining some of the core traits which were deemed crucial. Although changes had been made even during the classic pentalogy, they were never as intense as after the Crystal Dynamics takeover. Several characteristics of Lara's personality and behaviour have either disappeared or were contradicted in following releases. Rise of the Tomb Raider, as the latest TR game, marks the peak of such issue, placing the last in every test conducted. When compared to the ideal Lara, the Rise of the Tomb Raider Lara simply deviates too much.

To continue with the new brand or to please the fans of TRF community, as representatives of the series's loyal fanbase, the game's developer stands before a puzzling decision. It is possible that "new" Lara will have the same relationship potential as the "old" Lara in a long run, but this would have to put to further testing. The second option would be to return to Lara's core persona and release another exhilarating and globetrotting adventure. The third direction would require to find a compromise between old and new, to identify and salvage positive brand aspects of the reboot, combine then with brands past core features and get rid of unwelcomed & contradictory traits. Further in-depth research would have to be conducted, which would, on the other hand, indicate that fan's opinions matter, a developer's quality that

has been questioned by TRF. It would expand the brand network orbit and put fan's relationship with the franchise to a good use. Both sides would benefit in the end through the created value and reinforced bonds.

No matter which path will be taken, findings of this thesis could serve as a positioning overview of each Lara iteration over the serie's history and as a guideline to brand's core values which should be respected to preserve the linking bridge between the iconic brand and veteran customers. After all, enthusiastic support from a loyal customer crew is a sign of a well established brand that is capable of sailing through any market storms that lie ahead. If chosen otherwise, author still hopes that newcomers will show the same level of engagement over time.

## 8 References

1. ALBERT, Noel; MERUNKA, Dwight; VALETTE-FLORENCE, Pierre. *When consumers love their brands: Exploring the concept and its dimensions*. Journal of Business research, 2008, 61.10: 1062-1075.
2. BATRA, Rajeev; AHUVIA, Aaron; BAGOZZI, Richard P. *Brand love*. Journal of Marketing, 2012, 76.2: 1-16.
3. BERKOWITZ, Stephen D. *An Introduction to Structural Analysis: The Network Approach to Social Research*. Toronto: Butterworth, 1982.
4. CANNIFORD, Robin. *How to manage consumer tribes*. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 2011, 19.7: 591-606.
5. CASTELLS, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.
6. COVA, Bernard. *Community and consumption: Towards a definition of the "linking value" of product or services*. European journal of marketing, 1997, 31.3/4: 297-316.
7. COVA, Bernard; COVA, Veronique. *Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing*. European journal of marketing, 2002, 36.5/6: 595-620.
8. COVA, Bernard; DALLI, Daniele. *Working consumers: the next step in marketing theory?* Marketing theory, 2009, 9.3: 315-339.
9. DAFT, Richard; LENGEL, Robert H. *Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design*. Managements Science, 32(5), 1986, 554-571.
10. DUBROVSKY, Vitaly; KIESLER, Sara; SETHNA, Beheruz. *The equalization phenomenon: Status effects in computer-mediated and face-to-face decision making groups*. Human-Computer Interaction, 1991, 6: 119-146.
11. ELLIOTT, Richard; JANKEL-ELLIOTT, Nick. *Using ethnography in strategic consumer research*. Qualitative market research: An international journal, 2003, 6.4: 215-223.
12. ELLIOTT, Richard; WATTANASUWAN, Kritsadarat. *Brands as symbolic resources for the construction of identity*. International journal of Advertising, 1998, 17.2: 131-144.
13. FOURNIER, Susan et al. *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 2013. 456 p. ISBN 978-0-415-78313-2.



14. FOURNIER, Susan. *Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research*. Journal of consumer research, 1998, 24.4: 343-353.
15. FÜLLER, Johann; MATZLER, Kurt; HOPPE, Melanie. *Brand community members as a source of innovation*. Journal of Product Innovation Management, 2008, 25.6: 608-619.
16. GORBIS, Marina. *The Nature of the Future: Dispatches from the Socialstructured World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013.
17. HAYTHORNTHTWAITE, Caroline; WELLMAN, Barry; MANTEI, Marilyn. *Work relationships and media use: A social network analysis*. Group Decision and Negotiation, 1995, 4(3): 193-211.
18. HITZ, Starr Roxanne; TUROFF, Murray. *The Network Nation: Human Communication via Computer*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978.
19. KENNEDY, Aileen. *Electronic customer relationship management (eCRM): opportunities and challenges in a digital World*. Irish Marketing Review, 2006, 18.1/2: 58.
20. KOZINETS, Robert V. *Netnography: Redefined. 2nd ed.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015. 320 p. ISBN 978-1446285756.
21. KOZINETS, Robert V. *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities*. Journal of marketing research, 2002, 39.1: 61-72.
22. LYSLOFF, René T.A. *Musical community on the internet: An on-line ethnography*. Cultural Anthropology, 2003, 18(2): 233-263.
23. MCALEXANDER, James H.; SCHOUTEN, John W.; KOENIG, Harold F. *Building brand community*. Journal of marketing, 2002, 66.1: 38-54.
24. MERZ, Michael A.; HE, Yi; VARGO, Stephen L. *The evolving brand logic: a service-dominant logic perspective*. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 2009, 37.3: 328-344.
25. MITUSSIS, Darryn; O'MALLEY, Lisa; PATTERSON, Maurice. *Mapping the re-engagement of CRM with relationship marketing*. European journal of Marketing, 2006, 40.5/6: 572-589.
26. MOTION, Judy; LEITCH, Shirley; BRODIE, Roderick J. *Equity in corporate co-branding: The case of Adidas and the All Blacks*. European Journal of Marketing, 2003, 37.7/8: 1080-1094.
27. MUNIZ JR, Albert M.; O'GUINN, Thomas C. *Brand community*. Journal of consumer research, 2001, 27.4: 412-432.

28. MUÑIZ, JR, Albert M.; SCHAU, Hope Jensen. *Vigilante marketing and consumer-created communications*. Journal of Advertising, 2007, 36.3: 35-50.
29. O'SULLIVAN, STEPHEN R. *Facilitating consumer-consumer-brand relationships and a brand network orbit: Two sides of the brand community development coin*. Academy of Marketing Conference 2012, Marketing: catching the technology wave, Southampton, 2012,
30. O'SULLIVAN, STEPHEN R.; RICHARDSON, Brendan. *BPONG IRELAND: Using a Tribal Marketing Approach to Achieve Market Growth*. The case centre, 2011.
31. O'MALLEY, Lisa; PATTERSON, Maurice; KELLY-HOLMES, Helen. *Death of a metaphor: reviewing the marketing as relationships' frame*. Marketing Theory, 2008, 8.2: 167-187.
32. O'MALLEY, Lisa; TYNAN, Caroline. *The utility of the relationship metaphor in consumer markets: a critical evaluation*. Journal of Marketing Management, 1999, 15.7: 587-602.
33. O'SULLIVAN, Stephen R. *The Market Maven Crowd: Collaborative Risk-Aversion and Enhanced Consumption Context Control in an Illicit Market*. Psychology & Marketing, 2015, 32.3: 285-302.
34. O'SULLIVAN, Stephen R.; RICHARDSON, Brendan; COLLINS, Alan. *How brand communities emerge: The Beamish conversion experience*. Journal of Marketing Management, 2011, 27.9-10: 891-912.
35. PATTERSON, Maurice; O'MALLEY, Lisa. *Brands, consumers and relationships: A review*. Irish Marketing Review, 2006, 18.1/2: 10.
36. PENLEY, Constance; ROSS, Andrew. *Technoculture: Cultural Politics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
37. RAINIE, Lee; WELLMAN, Barry. *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2012.
38. RAMASWAMY, Venkat. *Co-creating value through customers' experiences: the Nike case*. Strategy & Leadership, 2008, 36.5: 9-14.
39. SCOTT, John. *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*. London: Sage, 1991.
40. SHETH, Jagdish N.; PARVATIYAR, Atul. *The evolution of relationship marketing*. International business review, 1995, 4.4: 397-418.
41. SCHOUTEN, John W; MCALEXANDER, James H. *Market Impact of a Consumption Subculture: the Harley-Davidson Mystique*. E - European Advances in Consumer Research Volume 1, 1993, 389-393.

42. SPROULL, Lee; KIESLER, Sara. *Reducing social context cues: The case of electronic mail*. Management Science, 1986, 32: 1492-1512.
43. STEFIK, Mark. *Internet Dreams: Archetypes, Myths, and Metaphors*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
44. TÖNNIES, Ferdinand. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (trans. Charles P. Loomis). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957.
45. TURNER, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969.
46. WASSERMAN, Stanley; FAUST, Katherine. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
47. WELLMAN, Barry. *Structural Analysis: From method and metaphor to theory and substance*. Social Structures: A Network Approach. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988, Pp. 19-61.
48. ZAMAZALOVÁ, Marcela et al. *Marketing. 2. přepar. a dopl. vyd.* Praha: C. H. Beck, 2010. 499 s. ISBN 978-80-7400-115-4.

*Online sources:*

49. ADCHARIYAVANICH, Navin. *Tomb Raider*. In: dafont.com [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.dafont.com/tomb-raider2.font>
50. ADULT-FANFICTION. In: Adult-FanFiction.org – Bringing readers & writers together since 2002 [online]. ©2005-2015 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://games.adult-fanfiction.org/story.php?no=600089884&chapter=2>
51. BBC. *PlayStation 2 sales soar*. In: BBC NEWS [online]. [16 January 2003] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/2664337.stm>
52. CDPROJEKTRED. *Physical Gwent Cards Appreciaton Thread*. In: CD Projekt Red – Forum – The Witcher Series [online]. [13<sup>th</sup> October 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://forums.cdprojektred.com/threads/59394-Physical-Gwent-Cards-Appreciaton-Thread>
53. COVERS. *Tomb raider legend – front back*. In: COVERS [online]. [2009] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://covers.box.sk/newsimg/dvdmov/max1220478781-frontback-cover.jpg>
54. CROSSLEY, Rob. *Xbox One Sales Put At 18 Million*. In: Gamespot [online]. [21 April 2016] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.gamespot.com/articles/xbox-one-sales-put-at-18-million-update/1100-6439045/>

55. DEVIANTART. In: Deviant Art [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.deviantart.com/>
56. DIVINITYORIGINALSIN. *Original Sin on Kickstarter*. In: Divinity: Original Sin [online]. [2013] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.divinityoriginalsin.com/kickstart.php>
57. DOLPHINWIKI. *Super Mario Sunshine*. In: Dolphin Emulator Wiki [online]. [24<sup>th</sup> July 2016] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: [https://wiki.dolphin-emu.org/index.php?title=Super\\_Mario\\_Sunshine](https://wiki.dolphin-emu.org/index.php?title=Super_Mario_Sunshine)
58. DREUNEN, Joost van. *PC trumps mobile, console in booming \$61bn digital games market*. In: gamesindustry.biz [online]. [26 January 2016] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2016-01-26-pc-trumps-mobile-console-in-booming-usd61bn-digital-games-market>
59. EMULEGION. In: EMULEGION [online]. © 2007-2014 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://www.emulegion.info/covers/covers/Tomb\\_Raider\\_II\\_back\\_cover.jpg](http://www.emulegion.info/covers/covers/Tomb_Raider_II_back_cover.jpg)
60. EMUPARADISE. *Lara Croft Tomb Raider – The Angel of Darkness*. In: EMUPARADISE – The biggest retro gaming website on earth! [online]. © 2000-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://www.emuparadise.me/Sony\\_Playstation\\_2\\_ISO/Lara\\_Croft\\_Tomb\\_Raider\\_-\\_The\\_Angel\\_of\\_Darkness\\_\(Europe\)\\_\\_\(En,Fr,De,Es,It\)/153672](http://www.emuparadise.me/Sony_Playstation_2_ISO/Lara_Croft_Tomb_Raider_-_The_Angel_of_Darkness_(Europe)__(En,Fr,De,Es,It)/153672)
61. ESA. *2015 Sales, Demographic and usage data: Essential Facts About The Computer And Video Game Industry*. In: esa: entertainment software association [online]. [April 2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/ESA-Essential-Facts-2015.pdf>
62. EUROGAMER. *Warner Bros. "misled" with paid-for positive Shadow of Mordor videos*. In: EUROGAMER.net [online]. [13<sup>th</sup> July 2016] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2016-07-12-warner-bros-misled-consumers-with-paid-for-positive-shadow-of-mordor-coverage-ftc-finds>
63. EUROMONITOR. *Console ownership by region*. In: Euromonitor passport database [online]. [2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.euromonitor.com/>
64. FANFICTION. In: FanFiction – Unleash your imagination [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.fanfiction.net/game/Tomb-Raider/>
65. GAMEFAQS 3. *Tomb Raider IV – GAME BOX SHOT*. In: GameFAQs [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://img.gamefaqs.net/box/0/3/9/1039\\_back.jpg](http://img.gamefaqs.net/box/0/3/9/1039_back.jpg)

66. GAMEFAQS 3. *Tomb Raider V – GAME BOX SHOT*. In: *GameFAQs* [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://img.gamefaqs.net/box/2/0/6/11206\\_front.jpg](http://img.gamefaqs.net/box/2/0/6/11206_front.jpg);
67. GAMEFAQS. *Tomb Raider – GAME BOX SHOT*. In: *GameFAQs* [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.gamefaqs.com/ps/199040-tomb-raider/images/128061>
68. GAMEFAQS. *Tomb Raider III – GAME BOX SHOT*. In: *GameFAQs* [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://img.gamefaqs.net/box/5/6/6/566\\_back.jpg](http://img.gamefaqs.net/box/5/6/6/566_back.jpg)
69. GAMESPOT. In: Gamespot [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.gamespot.com>
70. GAMEZINE. *Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 worldwide sales equal in 2008*. In: Gamezine [online]. [2008] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: [http://www.gamezine.co.uk/news/playstation-3-and-xbox-360-worldwide-sales-equal-in-2008-\\$1264624.htm](http://www.gamezine.co.uk/news/playstation-3-and-xbox-360-worldwide-sales-equal-in-2008-$1264624.htm)
71. GAUDIOSI, John. *The Sims 4 and other upcoming games to watch*. In: CNN [online]. [3<sup>rd</sup> September 2013] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/02/tech/gaming-gadgets/games-watch-gamescom/>
72. GOOD, Owen. *BioShock Creator: Please Stop Making Elizabeth Porn*. In: Kotaku [online]. [9<sup>th</sup> October 2013] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://kotaku.com/stop-making-porn-with-my-characters-bioshock-creator-p-1442945516>
73. HENRIQUE, Pedro. *TOMB RAIDER SAGA*. In: Deviant Art [online]. © 2014-2016 [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://pedro-croft.deviantart.com/art/TOMB-RAIDER-SAGA-480878627>
74. HOWLONGTOBEAT. In: HowLongToBeat – Track what you're playing, discover new games! [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://howlongtobeat.com>
75. IBISWORLD. *Global Book Publishing: Market Research Report*. In: IBISWorld: Where knowledge is power [online]. [February 2016] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.ibisworld.com/industry/global/global-book-publishing.html>
76. IFPI. *IFPI Global Music Report 2016*. In: ifpi [online]. [12 April 2016] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.ifpi.org/news/IFPI-GLOBAL-MUSIC-REPORT-2016>
77. JOGORAMA. In: Jogorama [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://jogorama.com.br/arquivos/noticias/2015/rise-of-the-tomb-raider-cap.jpg>



78. KICKSTARTER. *Divinity: Original Sin 2*. In: Kickstarter [online]. [30<sup>th</sup> September 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/larianstudios/divinity-original-sin-2/description>
79. KICKSTARTER. *Divinity: Original Sin*. In: Kickstarter [online]. [26<sup>th</sup> April 2013] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/larianstudios/divinity-original-sin/description>
80. KLEPEK, Patrick. *Ubisoft Removes Upcoming PC Games From Steam*. In: Giant Bomb [online]. [7<sup>th</sup> November 2014] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.giantbomb.com/articles/ubisoft-removes-upcoming-pc-games-from-steam-updat/1100-5078/>
81. LEACK, Jonathan. *The Sims 4 – The Best User Made Sims that Resemble Real Characters and People*. In: Crave [online]. [4<sup>th</sup> September 2014] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.craveonline.com/site/754625-sims-4-best-user-made-sims-resemble-real-characters-people#/slide/6>
82. LOFGREN, Krista. *2015 Video Game Statistics & Trends Who's Playing What & Why?*. In: Big fish games [online]. [3 March 2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.bigfishgames.com/blog/2015-global-video-game-stats-whos-playing-what-and-why/>
83. MAHESHVC. *This Is The Current State Of The Video Game Industry*. In: MAHESH VC [online]. [January 2016] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.maheshvc.com/blog/this-is-the-current-state-of-the-video-game-industry>
84. MOBYGAMES 2. In: Moby Games [online]. © 1999-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.mobygames.com/images/covers/l/62485-tomb-raider-the-last-revelation-playstation-back-cover.jpg>
85. MOBYGAMES 3. In: Moby Games [online]. © 1999-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.mobygames.com/images/covers/l/256750-lara-croft-tomb-raider-anniversary-playstation-2-back-cover.jpg>
86. MOBYGAMES 4. In: Moby Games [online]. © 1999-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.mobygames.com/images/covers/l/130994-tomb-raider-underworld-xbox-360-back-cover.jpg>
87. MOBYGAMES. In: Moby Games [online]. © 1999-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.mobygames.com/images/covers/l/168937-tomb-raider-ii-starring-lara-croft-playstation-back-cover.png>

88. MODDB. *VTMB Unofficial Patch by Wesp 5*. In: MOD DB [online]. [22<sup>th</sup> March 2016] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.moddb.com/mods/vtmb-unofficial-patch>
89. NEWZOO 2. *Esports in 2015: Engagement Grows as Revenues Surpass \$250 Million*. In: Newzoo [online]. [3 June 2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/esports-in-2015-engagement-grows-as-revenues-surpass-250-million/>
90. NEWZOO. *Global Games Market Will Grow 9.4% to \$91.5Bn in 2015*. In: Newzoo [online]. [22 April 2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/global-games-market-will-grow-9-4-to-91-5bn-in-2015/>
91. ORLAND, Kyle. *Analysis: Sony pushes past 50 percent of the worldwide console market*. In: ars TECHNICA [online]. [30 July 2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://arstechnica.com/gaming/2015/07/analysis-sony-pushes-past-50-percent-of-the-worldwide-console-market/>
92. PATREON. In: Patreon: Recurring funding for creators. [online]. ©2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.patreon.com/>
93. PEREIRA, Chris. *Here's What the Updated Marvel Ultimate Alliance 1 and 2 Look Like*. In: Gamespot [online]. [27<sup>th</sup> July 2016] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.gamespot.com/articles/heres-what-the-updated-marvel-ultimate-alliance-1-/1100-6442174/>
94. PFANGIRL. *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider and Queer Icon (Part 1)*. In: Pfangirl Through the Looking Glass - Film, comics, Tomb Raiding & Pop Culture [online]. [20<sup>th</sup> July 2015] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://pfangirl.blogspot.cz/2015/07/lara-croft-tomb-raider-and-queer-icon.html>
95. PLAYTONICGAMES. *Games – Yooka Laylee*. In: Playtonic Games [online]. ©2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.playtonicgames.com/games/yooka-laylee/>
96. QUOTESGRAM. *Ff7 Quotes*. In: Quotes Gram [online]. ©2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://quotesgram.com/ff7-quotes/>
97. REILLY, Luke. *Shenmue 3 Kickstarter Closes With Over \$6.3 Million*. In: IGN [online]. [19<sup>th</sup> July 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.ign.com/articles/2015/07/20/shenmue-3-kickstarter-closes-with-over-63-million>

98. REVIEWANYGAME. In: Review anygame – UK SECTION [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://uk.reviewanygame.com/content/images/products/tomb-raider-underworld-xbox-360.jpg>
99. SKIPPER, Ben. *Guild Wars 2 hacker “publically executed” in MMO for cheating*. In: International Business Times [online]. [1<sup>th</sup> May 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/guild-wars-2-hacker-publically-executed-mmo-cheating-1500648>
100. SMITH, Marc; RAINIE, Lee; SCHNEIDERMAN, Ben; HIMELBOIM, Itai. *Mapping twitter topic networks: From polarized crowds to community clusters*. In: Pew Internet & American Life Project [online]. [20<sup>th</sup> February 2014]. Available at: [www.pewinternet.org/2014/02/20/mapping-twitter-topic-networks-from-polarized-crowds-to-community-clusters/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/02/20/mapping-twitter-topic-networks-from-polarized-crowds-to-community-clusters/)
101. STATISTA. *TV and video revenue worldwide in 2015 and 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars)*. In: Statista: The Statistics Portal [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.statista.com/statistics/259985/global-filmed-entertainment-revenue/>
102. STATT, Nick. *Playing games on the PC is making a comeback*. In: cnet [online]. [14 June 2015] [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://www.cnet.com/news/playing-games-on-the-pc-is-making-a-comeback/>
103. STEAM. In: Steam – Tomb Raider [online]. © 2013 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://store.steampowered.com/app/203160/>
104. STELLALUNE 2. In: Stella’s Tomb Raider Blog [online]. © 1998-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb\\_raider\\_2\\_box.jpg](http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb_raider_2_box.jpg)
105. STELLALUNE 3. In: Stella’s Tomb Raider Blog [online]. © 1998-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb\\_raider\\_4\\_box.jpg](http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb_raider_4_box.jpg)
106. STELLALUNE 4. In: Stella’s Tomb Raider Blog [online]. © 1998-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb\\_raider\\_AOD\\_box.jpg](http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb_raider_AOD_box.jpg)
107. STELLALUNE 5. In: Stella’s Tomb Raider Blog [online]. © 1998-2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb\\_raider\\_anniversary\\_box.jpg](http://tombraders.net/stella/images/timeline/tomb_raider_anniversary_box.jpg)

108. STELLALUNE. *Help Tomb Raider Unlock a Guinness World Record*. In: Stella's Tomb Raider Blog [online]. [25<sup>th</sup> May 2016] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://blog.tombraiders.net/2016/05/help-tomb-raider-unlock-guinness-world.html>
109. T.V.JOHN. *Definition 2: Softporn*. In: Urban Dictionary [online]. [7<sup>th</sup> February 2013]. [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=softporn>
110. THEISOZONE 2. In: *THE ISO ZONE: The Worlds Finest Retro Gaming Resource* [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://www.theisozone.com/images/cover/psx-1316855452.jpg>
111. THEISOZONE. In: *THE ISO ZONE: The Worlds Finest Retro Gaming Resource* [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://theisozone.com/images/cover/psx-1316855499.jpg>
112. TOMBRAIDER. In: Tomb Raider [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.tombraider.com>
113. TOMBRAIDERCHRONICLES. In: *Tomb Raider Chronicles* [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.tombraiderchronicles.com/>
114. TOMBRAIDERFORUMS. In: TOMB RAIDER forums: hints // tips // chat // support [online]. ©2000-2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.tombraiderforums.com/>
115. TOMBRAIDERFORUMS. *The Age and Gender of forum members*. In: *TOMB RAIDER forums: hints // tips // chat // support* [online]. [2015-10-22]. [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.tombraiderforums.com/showthread.php?t=212595&highlight=sexuality+poll>
116. TOMBRAIDERFORUMS. *Things you should know when posting on the forum*. In: *TOMB RAIDER forums: hints // tips // chat // support* [online]. [2011-11-05]. [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.tombraiderforums.com/showthread.php?t=181343>
117. TOMBRAIDERFORUMS. *What is your sexuality?* In: *TOMB RAIDER forums: hints // tips // chat // support* [online]. [2010-08-31]. [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.tombraiderforums.com/showthread.php?t=172527&highlight=gender>
118. TOMBRAIDERFORUMS. *What realm of the world do you live in?* In: *TOMB RAIDER forums: hints // tips // chat // support* [online]. [2012-12-03]. [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.tombraiderforums.com/showthread.php?t=189593>

119. TRSEARCH. In: TRSearch [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.trsearch.org>
120. TRSEARCH. *PixStr 2.2 Rev 4 by Raider Croft and sapper*. In: TRSearch [online]. [October 2014]. [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.trsearch.org/Tools/8/>
121. TWITTER. In: Twitter.com/PlaytonicGames [online]. [2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/PlaytonicGames/status/594487419560419329>
122. TWITTER. *Tomb Raider Tweet*. In: Twitter/tombraidertweet [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/tombraidertweet>
123. USHER, William. *Capcom Gets Busted; On-Disc DLC Discovered For Street Fighter X Tekken*. In: Cinema Blend [online]. [2012] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.cinemablend.com/games/Capcom-Gets-Busted-Disc-DLC-Discovered-Street-Fighter-X-Tekken-40114.html>
124. Valve Corporation. *Steam client application* [software]. [cit. 2016-07-31]. Available from: <http://store.steampowered.com/about/>
125. VGSALES. *Xbox*. In: Nintendo GameCube [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: [http://vgsales.wikia.com/wiki/Nintendo\\_GameCube](http://vgsales.wikia.com/wiki/Nintendo_GameCube)
126. VGSALES. *Xbox*. In: Video Games Sales Wiki [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-03-11]. Available from: <http://vgsales.wikia.com/wiki/Xbox>
127. WALMART. *Rise of the Tomb Raider (Xbox One)*. In: Walmart [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <http://i5.walmartimages.com/dfw/dce07b8c-f941/k2-4b7b8677-b2a8-4232-9fe4-e3b92a15b44a.v1.jpg>
128. WIKIPEDIA. *Tomb Raider*. In: Wikipedia: The free encyclopedia [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb\\_Raider](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_Raider)
129. XBOXACHIEVEMENTS. *Batman: Arkham Asylum Achievements*. In: Xbox Achievements [online]. © 2006-2014 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.xboxachievements.com/game/batman-arkham-asylum-pc/achievements/>
130. XBOXGAMERTAG. *Stallion83*. In: Xbox Gamertag [online]. ©2015 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.xboxgamertag.com/search/Stallion83/>
131. YIN-POOLE, Wesley. *Ubisoft deactivating keys it says were “fraudulently” obtained and resold*. In: Eurogamer.net [online]. [26<sup>th</sup> January 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2015-01-26-it-looks-like-ubisoft-is-going-after-third-party-key-sellers>



132. YOUTUBE 2. In: YouTube/ badassgamez [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/user/badassgamez/playlists?sort=dd&view=1>
133. YOUTUBE 2. *Tomb Raider 3: All Cutscenes*. In: YouTube/ Comodín Cam [online]. [25<sup>th</sup> June 2012] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4IRZmXrFwI>
134. YOUTUBE 3. *Rise of the Tomb Raider: 20 Year Celebration Announcement Trailer*. In: YouTube/ TOMB RAIDER [online]. [19<sup>th</sup> July 2016] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxo1O-BDwdo>
135. YOUTUBE 3. *Tomb Raider The Last Revelation – full movie*. In: YouTube/ TOMB RAIDER MONDIALE [online]. [6<sup>th</sup> November 2012] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0psWLjJt3OM>
136. YOUTUBE 4. *Tomb Raider 2: All Cutscenes*. In: YouTube/ Comodín Cam [online]. [26<sup>th</sup> June 2012] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sW1FZf2quMU>
137. YOUTUBE 4. *Tomb Raider: Anniversary – The Movie*. In: YouTube/ TheMandySims [online]. [17<sup>th</sup> October 2012] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4A1IkvaiKQ>
138. YOUTUBE 5. *Tomb Raider Chronicles*. In: YouTube/tombraiderchronicles [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/c/tombraiderchronicles/>
139. YOUTUBE 6. The Family Gaming Team. In: YouTube/FGTeeV [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/user/FGTeeV/videos>
140. YOUTUBE 2. *Rise Of The Raider All Cutscenes Movie*. In: YouTube/ IZUNIY. [10<sup>th</sup> November 2015] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUThPhII9pc>
141. YOUTUBE 3. *Matthew McConaughey's reaction to Final Fantasy VII Remake*. In: YouTube [online]. [1<sup>st</sup> July 2015] [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXc-o3H1FYU>
142. YOUTUBE 7. Lazy Game Reviews. In: YouTube/ phreakindee [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-05-25]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/user/phreakindee/featured>
143. YOUTUBE. In: YouTube [online]. © 2016 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/>

144. YOUTUBE. *Rise of Tomb Raider Walkthrough Gameplay Part 1 – Intro (2015)*. In: YouTube/ theRadBrad. [9<sup>th</sup> November 2015] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snSbguhHCic>
145. YOUTUBE. *Tomb Raider 1 - All Cutscenes HD (1 - 12)*. In: YouTube/ Tomb Raider HD Videos [online]. [5<sup>th</sup> August 2011] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxo1O-BDwdo>
146. YOUTUBE. *Tomb Raider Angel of Darkness (part 1 cutscenes)*. In: YouTube/ Alannis Croft [online]. [28<sup>th</sup> March 2009] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6Y-q6jW7k0>
147. YOUTUBE. *Tomb Raider Chronicles Full movie All Cutscenes*. In: YouTube/ UPlayNetwork [online]. [10<sup>th</sup> May 2014] [cit. 2016-04-16]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGt8uoo0zPU>

## 9 List of abbreviations

Classic series – Tomb Raider video games from TR I to TR V

CMC – computer mediated communication

Core – Core Design, developer of the first six Tomb Raider video games

Crystal/ CD – Crystal Dynamics, current developer of the Tomb Raider franchise

DRM – Digital Rights Management

FMV – Full motion video

LC – Lara Croft

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community

Mod – Modification

MMO – Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game

PC – Personal computer

PDA – Personal digital assistant

PM – Personal message

R&D – research & development

Reboot – refers to TR (2013) and RotTR

RM – relationship marketing

RotTR – Rise of the Tomb Raider, the last installment in the TR franchise

TR – Tomb Raider video game franchise

TR (2013) – The first title in the reboot series of the TR franchise

TR A/ Anniversary – Tomb Raider: Anniversary

TR AoD/ AoD/ Angel of darkness – Tomb Raider: The angel of darkness

TR I/ TR 1 – Tomb Raider

TR II/ TR 2 – Tomb Raider II: Starring Lara Croft

TR III/ TR 3 – Tomb Raider III: Adventures of Lara Croft

TR IV/ TR TLR/ The last revelation: Tomb Raider IV: The last revelation

TR L/ Legend: Tomb Raider: Legend

TR U/ Underworld – Tomb Raider: Underworld

TR V/ Chronicles – Tomb Raider: Chronicles

TRC – TombRaiderChronicles.com

TRF – TombRaiderForums.com

## 10 Statement on the Use of the Results of the Diploma Thesis

Herewith I declare that

- I am informed that Act No. 121/2000 Coll. – the Copyright Act, in particular, Section 35 – Utilisation of the Work as a Part of Civil and Religious Ceremonies, as a Part of School Performances and the Utilisation of a School Work – and Section 60 – School Work, fully applies to my diploma thesis;
- I take account on the VSB – Technical University of Ostrava (hereinafter as VSB-TUO) having the right to utilize the diploma thesis (under Section 35(3)) unprofitably and for own use ;
- I agree that the diploma thesis shall be archived in the electronic form in VSB-TUO's Central Library and one copy shall be kept by the supervisor of the diploma thesis. I agree that the bibliographic information about the diploma thesis shall be published in VSB-TUO's information system;
- It was agreed that, in case of VSB-TUO's interest, I shall enter into a license agreement with VSB-TUO, granting the authorization to utilize the work in the scope of Section 12(4) of the Copyright act,
- It was agreed that I may utilize my work, the diploma thesis or provide a licence to utilize it only with the consent of VSB-TUO, which is entitled in such a case, to claim an adequate contribution from me to cover the cost expended by VSB-TUO for producing the work (up to its real amount).

Ostrava dated 15.7.2016

  
.....

Student's name and surname

## List of appendices

Appendix 1: My life and videogames, the self-reflection

Appendix 2: Introductory video transcript

Appendix 3: Online investigation about TR and Lara Croft

Appendix 4: Lara Croft, as imagined by her developers

Appendix 5: Questionnaire: The ideal Lara Croft

Appendix 6: Questionnaire: Statistics



## Appendices

### Appendix 1: My life and videogames, the self-reflection

Not everything pushes you as far in your life as honesty. The last time I had been honest with myself made me lose 66 pounds. It took a lot of nerve to stand in front of a mirror and express the crude truth. It was loud, uncomfortable and it felt somehow alienating. But it was a firm foundation to build on. It was a base I could act upon and take necessary measures to fix things up. If I am about to generate content that is interesting to read and that enlightens the topic of videogames, namely the Tomb Raider franchise, I need to keep this in mind, no matter how revealing this approach can be.

The second thought I have, prior to writing this introspective, is that we are all human, imperfect in design, having limitations and also context sensitive needs. We try to act like we all fit the “normal persona” blueprint we, as a society, made for ourselves. But the truth is that there is no such thing as a “normal” person. It is sad we have to conceal those little nuances that we think are exclusive to us, while in reality, they are shared among thousands. Did any of the Tomb Raider fans ever looked at a random building thinking: “Hey I wonder how Lara could climb that?” I strive to find answers for these type of questions, for questions that probably don’t seem normal to most of us, and it’s also what I love about the internet in general. It is liberating and allows you to express the smallest thoughts that lie on the seabed of our minds.

What if the things I write sound off-topic? What if they are not considered to be of any value? What if somebody thinks that people playing videogames, including me, are tad nuts? The third building block shapes to be the mortality. No matter how many people read these words, no matter how many of them could possibly criticize their contents, we will all die. Does it sound pessimistic? Well it surely could, but not in my eyes. Does it sound completely irrelevant? No, for me it provides the correct measure for everything. It represents the crude truth I mentioned before and as depressing as it can be, it grants a certain amount of freedom. I chose this topic of videogames, because I had felt it is of qualitative matter and closely connected to myself. It needs an introspective, it needs to connect with people who aren’t numbers or homogenic segments, as we try to label them in marketing, but individuals whose thoughts can be messy, but in the end, offer a better understanding.

With all these thoughts in my mind, serving as a pen, a writing tool to express my thoughts, I write these following words about myself, videogames and Tomb Raider.

I have always loved videogames. I can't even remember the first time I played one. My mum was, and still is, an accountant. She brought home this old, beige coloured PC with Windows 3.11 installed on it. It was intriguing, a box that is a gateway to another world. How does it work? How something made out of metals, plastic and minerals can think like a brain? Even though it's given man-made instructions in a form of a software, it still blows my mind that these rather uninteresting materials calculate and project a picture on a screen. Hell I am 24 now and I still don't really know how it works. It's one of those things that I need to find time for, in the future.

Besides being a technical marvel on its own, it was the games, who kept me interested in it. Me and my sister used to sit at the computer, trying to master the powers of MS-DOS. We learned the basic commands and had no problems running any game that was present on our hard drive. It was a mysterious place to be. There was literally no visualization whatsoever, unless you switched to the Windows environment. It was up to our own imagination to find out what does the box hold in its metallic cache. I remember typing "TombRaider.exe" in the dos prompt, hoping that the game would load out of nowhere. Sadly, it did not, but we still had many to play. Among the first games I have ever played were shooters Wolfenstein and DOOM, strategy game Dune, puzzle games Sokoban, Paganitzu, The incredible machine and Mickey's Jigsaw puzzles, and platformers Crystal Caves, Secret Agent Man and Duck Tales. We managed to get some other games later on, but it wasn't an easy task.

The games were not as easily available as they are today. There was no internet and the only way to get to play those games was via friends. But what about shops? They were surely selling games in 1990's. Well, as kids, we were allowed to play only around our, three storey tall, block of flats. The only shops I ever saw at that time were the grocery store, bakery, pharmacy and a toy store. We did not receive any pocket money either, until I board the elementary school. The only possible option was to copy the game from somebody else's floppy disk. This way, I managed to get my hands on games like The Lion King, Duke Nukem, Blood, Bio Menace, Prince of Persia and Mario. Parents didn't help me with finding, or playing games at all, it was my quest to undertake. But I wasn't completely alone. I had friends, friends with computers and games too! We visited each other, we played together and, with strong disagreement from the side of developers and distributors, shared those games among ourselves.

We were all pirates and shared this software of entertainment the same way people shared music. It was a collective thing.

When I say collective, I mean, it really was. I don't remember having any multiplayer games in the DOS era, besides the Golden Axe. They were all meant to be single player, but ended up being a spectacle of entertainment for a group of kids who were glued to the screen in the same manner, as the actual player was. There were no manuals, no tips, no walkthrough videos to watch and follow. You had to find it out yourself, or in a group. That's why we watched other friends play, in a total silence, or in a gunfire of comments. Because the player had the know-how, he/she knew how to get further in the game, how to get somewhere beyond that "super hard" point we couldn't pass. Or we simply mocked them and watched them fail miserably. I remember being on a vacation with parents in Croatia, when I was about ten. They had this Neo-Geo arcade machine there. In order to play, you had to insert coins in it. The game was called Spinmaster. It was a beat-'em-up game in which you annihilated tens of enemies with a yo yo toy. The strange thing that occurred to me was that two little boys, who were even younger than me, approached me and watched me play the game. Then, instead of trying the game themselves, they gave me their own money to play it. I was reluctant at first, as I didn't want to look like a free rider stealing little kids money. But they insisted. So I played, and we all had fun.

The other time, our family was on a vacation in my home country, the Czech Republic. It was a small camp situated in the woods. On the first floor of the main building, next to a pool table and a dart board, was this red and black arcade machine, decorated with a grey dragon incorporated in a number three. Nobody was playing the cabinet the first time I saw it, but it was turned on with sounds of battle roars emitting from within. Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3 it was. I don't dare to guess how much money I spent on that game. It was an amount that was, at that point, quite unimaginable for me. Yet parents saw that I was having fun, so they sponsored my holiday past time without any complaints. The point of this second story is that I kept coming back to the game because it was hard. I kept dying all the time and managed to defeat the third combatant in a row at best. But that was the magic, the games were rather short, had simple controls, visuals and game mechanics, but they were hard to master. They were like a challenge, either public or personal. The arcades were a place where everyone could see you playing. If you were good, you got surrounded by kids dying to see the game's final boss crumble in its knees. If you managed to beat the game, you were given an intangible badge, a trophy for your achievements. Not only you had an intrinsic feeling of victory, but also could

enjoy appreciation from you fellow gamers and took place in the machines leaderboard, aka the list of top players. From this perspective, it was like a sport exhibition.

I attended a LAN party once, with my sister's ex-boyfriend and his friends. We created teams and played Aliens vs. Predator on our PC's. I was in the group of marines that went on a mission to burn down those extraterrestrial monsters. Instead, I set ablaze every single marine in my own group. Needless to say, the aliens won. We also played some Heroes of Might and Magic, this time competing with each other individually. In both cases it was a social phenomenon a light hearted sport event. You chat, crack jokes, eat, play, compete, sleep, it's a complex thing to do.

My love for videogames was supported at home, on vacations, at my friends' homes and even at school. We had a subject called informatics yearly on. We learned (let's be honest, "we practiced" would be a much more suitable word) how to use a computer. We did some educational games with puzzles, mathematics, language test and many more. We also learned the basics of text editing and presentations. Some of the teachers had probably noticed our interest in computers, so they opened the "PC" hobby group. Yes, it was called that ambiguously. For most of us, it was the opportunity to play games like Sim City 2000 and Vlak or to simply browse the web at a snail pace. It was fun nonetheless. After the long day at school, some of my classmates, including me, attended the after-school care. And yet again, we were given the chance to pursue one of our favourite past times. At a certain time of the day, for a limited amount of time, the teacher plugged in the Sega Mega drive and let us play. I remember the games like it was yesterday, Golden Axe 3, Zombies ate my neighbors, Jurassic park and Contra: Hard corps. We played Golden Axe the most, along with Contra. If there's a fellow gamer reading these lines right now, he or she might stray away to one of the previous paragraphs concerning difficulty. As the name suggests, Contra: Hard corps wasn't a walk in the park. We didn't get pass the twenty minute mark of an hour and a half long game. Yet we re-played it for the challenge. Golden axe was also very challenging but we eventually managed to beat it with our powers combined.

Both Mortal Kombat, Contra and Golden Axe allowed the player to choose a character from a more or less varied rooster. I used to play as female characters all the time. "I choose female characters because I like them," I said to my friend. "But people select characters in order to be like them," he replied. So, you may ask, what's the truth? Did I chose to play as "girls" because I felt like they were cool looking, fast and agile and break the "damsel in

distress” stereotype? Or did I intuitively chose those characters because I felt more like them? Had I had more courage, I would have written this in the first paragraph. The truth is that raw honesty has helped me more than once in my life. It helped me to realize my own sexuality. Being gay, I have no problems playing as female characters. To answer the previous question, both statements are correct. I choose girls because they are faster, lighter and less cumbersome. In addition to that I cannot relate to the “brute” stereotype that was incorporated into the personality of many male characters. I feel no pleasure in playing a game at the speed and a weight of an army tank, showcasing just as much emotions and empathy. I simply cannot relate to that archetype. Fortunately, game developers have partially abandoned the need for the testosterone dripping killing machines in favour of more sophisticated personalities. Travelling back to the future, I can say that I am fine with my sexuality both in the real and the virtual world. Nowadays I tend to pick whoever I like, both aesthetically and story-wise. I pick men more, because now, I feel okay in my own skin and have no need to shift to somebody else, if the capabilities of the characters are the same. I realized that my whole persona is not limited by my body and that I can be happy with who I am. I still won’t probably jump on anyone demanding a kick box death match in an MMA cage, but that’s fine, as many men are like that, no matter their sexuality. So what else has changed for me, besides being at peace with myself? The fact is that in modern games, you are given the options to create a character. I choose male because I can make him my own, less muscular, more nerdy, just like me. Plus you make dialog/story choices throughout the game, you project yourself to the game even if you play as a fixed character. And that’s the cool thing about the modern games, you can personalize them. And when you can’t, the complexity of characters, who may seem a little bit flat at first, gets deepened by the expansive storytelling and presents you with at least some aspects you can relate to. That may explain my shift in gaming behaviour.

Through the next few years at the elementary school, we upgraded to Windows 95 and got a considerably more powerful hardware. Finally! I was able to see the games in colour, rather than in greyscale and we also bought speakers which meant I could actually hear the sound effects and music (if you don’t count the archaic internal PC speaker that produced sounds qualitatively on par with the noises R2D2 makes in the Star wars movies, I played with no proper sound). During that period, I started to get pocket money and bought some games which I still own. As I opened the compartment under my bed, I found big box releases of shooters like Hexen and Heretic, point and click adventure games Broken Sword 1 and 2, Shadow of the comet and Darkseed 2, platformers Jazz Jackrabbit 2 and Montezuma’s return,



the RPG Hexplore, Mageslayer and Rage of Mages 2 and the legend amongst the strategy games Heroes of Might and Magic 3.

We played HoMaM3 ad nauseam. My best friends bought the game at the same store, at the same time, and we all engaged in a single player story mode or in a hot-seat multiplayer. Jazz Jackrabbit 2 was the best game to play with my sister. It was colourful, fast paced, action packed 2D platformer with goofy characters and a killer soundtrack. Besides the story mode, it offered head-to-head challenges like racing, diamond collecting and battle. I have fond memories of us playing the game over and over again, chatting, laughing, cooperating and I dare to say we would still enjoy it today.

As I am writing about those two last games I cannot help my brain to stop playing the music that accompanied them. The Rampart town theme that plays in HoMaM3 when you enter the city of the same name, immediately pops up in mind. It starts at a very slow pace, with only strings and a flute creating a lazy ambiance, then the whole orchestra starts playing and it slowly inverts into a powerhouse of epic proportions. It's just like nature, the beginning feels small in scale, it's thin and gentle, like the morning dew and mist. Then it grows into vast oceans and mountains ranges. The fraction, to whom the city belongs in the game, represent nature. The music fits perfectly with those elves, centaurs, unicorns and dragons inhabiting the place. It's a symbiosis of the art, story and music. With Jazz, the first track I recall is the Diamondus theme. It's upbeat, with ringing synthesizers, overly colourful and positive. When I look at the games design it fits perfectly. The background of Diamondus level is basically a grassland. Everything on the screen moves in a cartoonish fashion, flowers, mushrooms, trees, bees, leaves, the parallax background of a clear blue sky and there are red, green and blue coloured diamonds dancing around everywhere. You collect gold coins, gold coins ring, the music rings, expensive items ring, diamonds are expensive, the level is called Diamondus ... it all makes sense. Also when I think about it, the whole (flawless) soundtrack was synth driven, melodic electronica, the genre I would appreciate in next years to come. Did it affect my musical preferences? The last thing I would like to add is, that at certain occasions the music kept me replaying a level, like in Tekken 4. The stage titled Poolside channels it's summery and sultry vibes through a trance song that plays on a loop. It's like a clash of Above&Beyond's Volume 1 and Robert Miles's Children but in contrary to the latter one, it's strictly carefree. The soundtrack of Rayman 2, which I wholeheartedly adore, kept me from putting down the controller when I died in a level where Rayman has to save the family of his friend Globox. Should you die in that level, a text pop-up appears stating something like this: "Don't give up Rayman, you are

our only hope.” Simultaneously, an inspiring track starts to play, and suddenly you feel the urge not to let any of your virtual friends down.

The games we played at that time, were more mature, they required strategic approach (HoMaM3), problem solving (Broken Sword), creativity and design (The Sims 1) and a sense for doing business (Rollercoaster Tycoon). They showed me the need of making plans and preparations, they forced me to think a few steps further and made me realize the responsibility of my actions. In this manner those games were quite educational.

Some of the games were more mature in a different way. They were meant exclusively for mature audiences. Those of you, who have played Darkseed 2 or Shadow of the comet, surely know that both games are nothing but a nightmare fuel. Based on a H. P. Lovecraft’s work, Shadow of the comet’s horror story is not meant for little kids, just as the biomechanical art style of Darkseed 2, created by the famous H. R. Giger. I still remember the creepy soundtrack Darkseed 2 had, how the main protagonists turned out to be a homicidal psychopath and how his mother’s head exploded at the end of the story. The visuals didn’t help it either, the developers used photos of real actors who were implemented in the game and mixed with Giger’s art that strives to combine human flesh with machines, meat and steel. If that doesn’t sound eerie enough to you, then I don’t know what does. There were many more games that took similar approach. DOOM’s enemies consisted mainly of demons, the level design used satanic imagery and took place in hell, among other locations. Games like Silent Hill and Nightmare creatures relied on heavy fog that created the never-ending tension that something will eventually jump at you from the shadows and eat you alive. I remember running back home from my friend’s place after we played Nightmare creatures for few hours. My best friend acted the same, after we played Doom 3 in the evening when nobody was home and the light in our hallway suddenly broke. Still I don’t feel like I have been affected playing those horror games, I don’t think they have left a negative mark. In fact, I am still as much afraid of them as I was back then.

Horror atmosphere goes well along with violence, although it does not necessarily have to. I have played many violent games in my life but I don’t feel like an aggressive sociopath who would run around with a saw, moving people in his neighbourhood, as I saw in the game Postal 2. I won’t even take a car, upgrade it with metallic spikes and go on a road rage against old ladies and deer, as in Carmageddon 2. Hell I won’t even jump at people, trying to suck their blood dry and then shred them into pieces like salami with wrist blades, just like in Bloodrayne

2. On a lower level of violence, me and my best friend trapped our sims in a pool and let them drown, in The Sims 2. We allowed them to run around with scissors, which inevitably resulted in their deaths. We even burned Santa Claus alive in a room from which we deleted all doors. We rolled a carcass of a brown bear down the peak of the highest mountain in the The Elder scrolls Oblivion and also robbed somebody's house clean in the capital city. We deleted parts of a fully occupied rollercoaster in the RollerCoaster tycoon, which ended up with people being catapulted alive from the attraction. We also tear down a few fences in ZOO tycoon to see how fast would tigers and lions eat the visitors. Violence in games can be quite funny, especially when it has a comical aspect to it. Like when you run over a pedestrian with a car in The Simpsons Hit and run and she screams: "Think of the children," to which Marge responds: "Please don't sue us again." On the level of Mortal Kombat X however, when you can see and hear somebody's bones being broken or guts being torn apart in a very realistic fashion, it ends being funny to me. Seeing your limbs getting slowly cut off in Quake 4 is just as gross. The same goes for torture scenes, they are never entertaining in my eyes. And even when you don't see the tortured subject, like in Bioshock's Infinite Burial at the sea DLC, it is quite an unpleasant experience.

Somewhere at the end of elementary school, my parents bought a new PC. This time however, it wasn't made out of scrap parts, it had no faulty hard drive with damaged memory sectors, and neither did it have a malfunctioning monitor that you had to turn on and off twice in order to make it work properly. I was a king, finally after all those years I had a PC that was better than anyone else's. I felt pride when I launched a fully 3D game in a high resolution of 1024x768 and it didn't play like a slideshow. I even bought an upgrade later on, the NVidia GeForce 6600 GT, a beast of a card at that time. I told everyone who was willing to listen. My friends, who were into gaming, admired my "gaming rig". It was like a Ferrari you had home and which you could show at few occasions. Nowadays I don't really have the urge to tell everyone, but I have to admit that when I bought the NVidia's GTX970 I shared it with fellow gamers and showed off a little bit. We had a family birthday party and I remember playing Far Cry 4 with my cousins even though I am not fan of the franchise at all. It simply showcased the power of our new computer, simple as that. On a second thought, maybe I haven't changed that much.

I also frequently visit sites that show the card's benchmark in newly released games, just to make sure that I invested my money right. You also tend to protect the hardware you own. I remember rooting for Xbox 360 after I bought it. I watched those graphics comparison

videos with Playstation 3 to justify my decision to buy the first console over the latter. I didn't intervene into the comment section of the video though. I even wanted to buy the successor, the Xbox One, it was my plan until I saw the whole marketing vision behind it. Without knowing anything relevant about it, I was tempted to buy it, because I was so satisfied with the last iteration.

During my time at high school and university I bought some consoles (Playstation 2, Xbox 360), handhelds (Nintendo DS and Playstation portable) and a notebook. The intensity of gaming has lowered due to the difficulty of my studies and the fact that I started living more healthy. I enjoy going to the gym because it allows me to transfer the strain from the mind to the body. And the dose of endorphins that get released into your system after each workout, make your problems suddenly seem a little less serious. I still like playing videogames, they give me the opportunity to escape into a virtual world where I face different problems than I do in reality. In fact, in games you can actually change the world, set things in motion and most importantly, feel the phenomena of completion. You get a quest, you undertake it and you finish it. A great feeling of achievement, unlike many things in the real world that seem to drag slowly for ages, oh how I hate that. Also I used the word escape intentionally. Sometimes you just don't like the things you see, the world you are part of. So you delve into the depths of a virtual world where you can be anything you would like to be. "I have never felt that need," says the part of me that doesn't want to look stupid and embarrass itself in front of the reader. But that would be a big fat lie. Who had been working on The Sims 2 town that was more populated than New York? Me and my best friend. We created this gargantuan city that was populated by hundreds of virtual people we had created. From the soil of our creativity, many existing celebrities, TV show characters, videogame personas, friends, family members, and folklore beings, arose. When a replica of Paris Hilton managed to sing terribly in a bar, hurling drinks at whoever she disagreed with, we knew we did a good job with the cloning. People like Santa Claus, Buffy the Vampire slayer, Mileena from Mortal Kombat, our math teacher, and the whole cast of the Ugly Betty soap opera were juxtaposed in one neighbourhood, interacting with each other. We made this freestyle copy of the reality we lived in. We installed many free downloadable content and mods that altered the game heavily. There were visual upgrades, new interactions, bug fixes, new clothes, new hairstyles, new furniture and decorations. All available for free, from the vast community that united on the website called Modthesims. We had a great time every time we turned the game on. The game was a tool, an instrument for our self-expression.

Sometimes I still get lost in the first two Harry Potter games, for me Hogwarts equals a safe haven, Harry Potter equals my childhood. I have grown up with the books, the movies, the games, simultaneously with the three main characters. My age was their age. When J.K. Rowling said that memorable quote on the premiere of the last movie: “Hogwarts will always be there for you,” I knew that she knew. So yes I escape, but temporarily, reaping the virtual benefits but never getting lost in it. Sometimes when the problems fall on my head, I turn on games like Pandora’s Box, Bejeweled 3 or Hoyle Puzzle and Board games. Those games have a very subtle ambient music playing in the background and are all puzzle based. They keep your brain active but they were not made to test the speed of your reactions. There are no explosions, no deaths, no violence, no moral choices, nor enemies. It’s just you and your time to chill. The bottom line would be that I still like videogames, but I am aware of reality, of my duties and let’s face it, I want to be fit and attractive. Eating a bag of potato crisps while playing The World of Warcraft, as seen in the South Park’s episode: Make love, not Warcraft, won’t help you with your aesthetic and health goals.

As for the distribution and price of the videogames, I am happy with the current state. There are many websites offering games at reasonable prices, with the luxury of additional services. Since I have more money than before, I can afford to buy games legally now. With Steam, GOG, G2A and Kinguin around, there’s no need for piracy in my eyes. Especially when you stumble upon a sale on Steam or GOG. Thousands of games reduced to one digit price tag. I have bought so many games on Steam that I can’t even count it. I haven’t completed even 20% of the catalogue I have there. But what could I do? It was 90% off! Even worse, how could I resist buying a bundle that included 10 Star Wars games for 10 USD? Not the bad ones, but the really good ones, like Knights of the Old Republic or The force unleashed. I remember playing those games, they were great, but it could be the nostalgia playing the strings of my brain as well. On top of that Humble bundle, the seller, gives away significant part of its revenues to charity, it was a no-brainer for me: good games, nostalgia, low prices, immediate download, charity. Have you bought the new Heroes of Might and Magic 7 on launch? For 59,99 USD? Or are you the sort of person that has been waiting for it to plummet to 12 USD month after its release? The pricing has become very volatile, especially on the PC gaming market. You can buy digital codes for the newest games on virtual marketplaces like G2A or Kinguin. You get the key for half of the price, even before the game launches. The discrepancy in the price is so big that I wonder how long it will take the publishers to legally ban them. Are



they loosing revenues? Well I used to buy one game a year. Now I buy one game a week. Let that sink in for a moment.

I won't even start about DLC. That's the way to cover those "lost profits". I despise this practice. All those pre-order bonuses, cut content that is presented as additional, and the price tag that sometimes overreaches 50% of the value of the base game. But it hurts my need for completion. It cleverly uses my weakness. I am a collector, I need to have all the content and complete it all because otherwise it feels underwhelming. Without it, it feels incomplete. I must admit that I have bought some of the DLC while discounted. So besides being a compulsive buyer who spends a lot of money on games that he doesn't play, who buys some games because they "used to be good", author of this thesis also have the complex of completion, needing to complete every game on 100% where possible which sadly includes buying some story based DLC. I said I will honest, so here it is, label me nuts.

The other thing with a price is that it seems connected with gatekeepers. If the game sucks, bad reviews spread. Despite the marketing massage, gamer's unite once again, providing truthful information to the gaming world. You try to sell a broken game like The Arkham knight? You will get publicly lynched! You, as a developer and publisher, will have to beg on your knees and ask the internet for its forgiveness. They have to apologize, provide a compensation (free game, free DLC, discount). It's a public court a last bastion of democracy in my eyes. Viva la internet! The price often radically drops after bad reviews.

Other benefits of the digital product, besides the price, include having the game constantly with you (it's bound to your account), having it updated automatically, keeping track of your achievements and having your saves backed up. Should you have problems, you can ask for a refund. I was reluctant to digital format at first, but then I started to love it. I want a game, I look it up, I put it in the basket, pay for it, download it and I play. Simple as that. The only downside to this is that the service can crash any time, the company can go bankrupt or I can lose internet connection. Under any of those circumstances, your games that you paid for, disappear.

Travelling back to the present, I am in my last year of studies, still living with my parents, in Ostrava, Czech Republic, wondering if I would survive another three to become a PhD. in marketing. While writing this thesis, I sit in my room, trying to block the million lines of monologue my father produces daily with these noise-insulated headphones. I am in a dire need of moving to my own flat. My current state is that I would definitely sacrifice my left arm

to the devil to get a boyfriend. But I am also aware that getting one would mean the end of my education. I am a loving person, I would try to cook him a breakfast even with that left arm chopped off. And I would still probably have enough time to tell him “Bon appetite” before fainting from blood loss. How I love cooking and baking, especially for friends. They are like power generators to me, they inspire me and they support me. I love them all. Besides schoolwork, I love regular workouts at the gym, because they keep my mind clean and body firm. Listening and chatting about pop music, since it’s a strong linking instrument, all aspects of brand love included. Watching shows like The Simpsons, Mad TV, The Nanny, South Park and Star Gate or going to the cinema to watch a random Marvel movie, they are all fantastic!

Funnily enough, while staying in Vienna, I had to describe myself as if I was a brand, which correlates with one of the goals of this self-reflection. Who am I? Besides basic demographics and interests that I have already described, I had to write a brand mantra for that subject, it said: “To love and be loved. To be open hearted and see the better in every person. To care and support even if it means sacrifice of your own needs. To educate and be educated, to spiritually expand and find inner stability. To support these ideals with actions.” Slogan: “We are all we need,” sums it up pretty nicely. Besides this, I also wrote some constituents of my personality, such as outspoken, faithful, firm valued, humorous, creative and persistent. I don’t like describing myself, but sometimes we should think more about the direction we are heading. The conclusion of that homework was this:

*Conclusion*  
*And self-reflection*

The brand does not fit into the world of product/service business, unless it is put in a relationship heavy role. Business environment is often immoral and lacks firm, socially conscious values and goals. Short term targets of many business companies cause that their output is of low quality, lacks rational thinking, doesn't support wellbeing of others, and often takes the easy, dishonourable path of poor morals to reach them. Highly competitive behaviour of colleagues and competitors alike is interwoven with anything but warm-heartedness, empathy or selflessness and any sacrifice made by the brand would end with speculations about its sincerity, since consumers judge others through the lens of themselves.

Unless the target segment of employers on the business market link with the brand on a value level, its full potential will remain unused.

Education, social services or restaurant services would be a far better match, as they allow broader possibilities when it comes to flexible work style and creative solutions, and are aimed at socially responsible goals and conscious and involve the human factor more.

I'll either engage in research of global relationship marketing and become a teacher at university. Or become an owner or chef in a restaurant. Or be employed in a cause-oriented agency.

I need to believe that what I am doing is the right thing [the golden circle principle]

*Conclusion*

I think that doing a relationship focused marketing research via Netnography fits my

personality. I want to know the “why” behind Tomb Raider, I want to know what do we share and what does it say about me? I am not religious, but I don’t lack faith. Such a small paragraph for such a crucial piece of information. Well, I set my focus on videogames and Tomb Raider, so I think I have uncovered just enough.

So why do I write this thesis? I want to summarize my experience with videogames because they have played a big part in my life, share this knowledge with other gamers and non-gamers, make the act of writing the diploma thesis more enjoyable and try to apply a marketing framework that caught my interest. Also, I would like to do something new. We have practiced those questionnaires just enough and Netnography seemed like a nice, qualitative alternative. I am into chatting with people, I have empathy, I am very open hearted, on the edge of being open to attack, everything we do has a meaning, but sometimes it is left unsaid, I need to see deeper than numbers. That’s why I chose this method. Relationship marketing clicked with my sense for righteousness and morality, because it doesn’t try to rip off anybody. Instead, it tries to make the company’s output better through collective cooperation. Everybody benefits in the end. And yet again, I picked up the hard route. The last thing you need to know about me, and which I need to get printed on a mug or on a T-shirt, I am a masochist when it comes to work. I always make things hard for myself, but I feel that the experience makes me stronger both in skill and morale. I try to choose the path that feels right, not the easiest one.

In conclusion, I must say that this retro/introspective went better than I thought. I followed this thin golden thread and it safely lead me through the caverns of my memory. It helped me generate a lot of questions I hope to find answers for, eventually. I unintentionally uncovered that my past gaming behaviour inconspicuously mirrors in the contemporary world. Three months are left for the world to see the new DOOM sequel, labelled simply as DOOM. The first game I started with twenty years ago would become a “new thing” for young gamers around the world. Just now, I am playing the 11<sup>th</sup> Tomb Raider game, whose first instalment came out in 1996. The old games I loved and still love today are being newly distributed on sites like GOG, re-released and re-mastered for new systems and generations of gamers. Some of them get taken care of by gamers themselves, they are being patched to eliminate bugs and glitches, modded to work on newer systems. Game sharing, alias the piracy, is still a thing in today’s world. Sharing the experience of gameplay has become a social phenomenon with the birth of YouTube and its let’s play streams and game reviews. Gamers still watch each other play, they comment their performance in online discussions, and they also compete, but this time for money! E-sports are professionally organized, sponsored and can be the source of

living for gamers. The immersion in games and its threat to reality becomes apparent as some gamers sacrifice their time and health to farm items and gold in online MMOS, forgetting their real lives. And it goes further. We are on a brink of virtual reality, with headsets like the Oculus rift that can transfer the user right into the game. The pricing has become an issue once again, with publishers trying to get extra money with DLC. Violence in games is still discussed to this day, the advanced realism of videogames has managed to keep the parents concerned about the mental health of their children. Gamers are loyal to their childhood brands and are willing to spend their hard earned money to support their further sequels. They have grown up, they work, they have money, and don't hesitate to partake in a crowdsourcing campaign for their favourites. The games have become major, multi-million dollar costing projects and often provide employment to those fans. Simultaneously with that, gamers turn their sights to indie games that offer similarly simplistic, yet complex gameplay the older arcade games offered. That also goes hand in hand with higher difficulty. We have come full circle, at least once. And I am proud to be a part of one of the fastest evolving industries in the human history. What the future brings remains to be seen.

### **The questions I generated through my gaming introspection**

#### **Games and sentiment**

Can a game play an important role in player's memories? Are games usually connected to the player's friends/siblings/parents? Is this one of the reasons they love a certain franchise? Is nostalgia a reason to buy an old game? Is sentiment a reason why some gamer's play old games? Is sentiment able to cloud one's judgement about the game's quality?

#### **Gaming as a social activity**

Are games naturally multiplayer? Do people enjoy watching other people play videogames? Why do they do it? Is the game sharing a "friend" thing that strengthens bonds? Do people organize social events that are centred solely on gaming? Can a "let's come to my house and play" serve as a socialization cue (to make friends)? Is gaming considered to be a competitive sport? Why yes? Why not?

#### **The hardware immersion**

Do players play games because of their cutting edge technologies (like graphics and physics)? Do gamers boast about how powerful their rig is? Can a powerful PC be considered

as a measurement of success (expressive function)? Does playing a certain game reflect a social status (do games have expressive function)? Is buying a certain hardware (parts, or the whole console) considered to be an investment? Do people tend to openly protect their investment? Are gamers faithful to the brands of their HW?

### **Games as a difficult achievement**

Has the difficulty of games changed throughout the years? (Are games too easy nowadays?), Why has it changed? Are modern players too lazy to figure things out themselves?, Do modern games navigate the player too much?, Why do games include such navigation, hints, tips and highlight mechanics? (Is it because of a sensory overload?), Is hard difficulty seen as a genre? Why does the games difficulty matter? Do gamers perceive beating a difficult game as a lifetime achievement? Do the in-game achievements matter to gamers? Why? Why gamers like account bound achievements? Do they use these achievements to project their status (extrinsic) or for the inner feeling (intrinsic)? Would they lose their value if they were not made public?

### **Availability and price**

How do gamers perceive the price of videogames? Have they ever pirated a game because of the price? What other reasons are there for piracy? Have they ever bought a game they pirated earlier? Are gamers sensitive to sales/ price reduction? Do they ever buy games they don't intend to play, because of the lowered price? Do gamers have a big backlog (aka too many games to play)? Do they think the number of available titles affects the game's difficulty? Do they think it affects the game's depth? Can a price reduction demotivate players from buying the game at launch?

### **The complex of completion**

What is the stance of players towards DLC? Do they considered the DLC to be fairly priced? Does DLC motivate/demotivate the player from buying the game? What does motivate players to buy/not to buy DLC? Was there a situation when you bought the game because of pre-order DLC? Does the DLC affect the perceived value of the base game? (damage the base game/ make it seem less valuable?)



## **Digital format and platforms**

What are the upsides of buying games digitally? What are the downsides? Do gamers prefer having the game in a physical form? Why? How do they perceive the value of digital games compared to the physical ones? What is the most beloved digital platform for distribution? What aspects do the gamers love about it? Do they use the platform for any other functions besides gaming? Does the digital format increase the frequency of purchase?

## **Choose a character**

Is personality more important than looks when you pick up a character to play as? Do you pick up characters who are similar, or dissimilar to you? Do people gender swap? Why do they pick men/women, for what traits? Is gender swapping connected to sexuality? Would the person, who pick the specific gender, rather be that gender? Do you choose the dialogue options the same way as you would choose them in real life? Have you ever played as the “dark side”? Do you feel responsibility for your gaming choices (morale)? Have you ever learned anything from a game (gained a skill, an understanding)?

## **The music and sound**

Does music affect the gameplay experience? Is it important for the music to be in symbiosis with the games art? Has anyone listened to the game’s soundtrack outside the game? Does a song have the power to spark associations? Does the game spark the same associations as the track the person recalls? Does the favourite soundtrack need to be in the same genre the gamer listens to normally? Are players’ musical preferences affected by their childhood games? Is it possible to love the game solely on a basics of music? Has anybody replayed a level because of the music? Do people get inspired by music to keep on playing?

## **Horror and violence**

Did some game(s) creep you out? Are you still afraid to play some of those today? Did they leave a mark on you in any way?

Do you like, enjoy playing violent games? Do you switch the violence off/ to a lower level, if it is an in-game option? Has a video game ever made you feel uncomfortable? Have you ever quit playing game because it was too violent? Would you let your kids play violent games? Did your parents try to prevent you from playing video games? Do you think that in

game violence transfers to the real life behaviour? Do you think that in-game violence can be fun?

### **The virtual escape**

Do you think that gaming is a healthy hobby? Do you think that gaming has had a negative impact on your health? Do you prefer the virtual reality over the offline one? Have you ever considered videogames to be a safe space (safe haven) to you? Do people experience the phenomena of completion/ achievement when they finish a difficult quest/game? Do games help you to relax and regenerate? Have you ever lost yourself in the game to the extent that it had negative impact on your real life?

### **Create, share and play**

How do gamers perceive personalization in games? Do gamers seek tools rather than a rigid set of gaming mechanics (sandbox)? Do gamers use the game's creation tools/editors when they are given the opportunity? Do they remix and mod the contents? If so, why do they mod the game? Do they do it for themselves or/and for the others? Why do they share the work with each other online? Is modding considered to be a job?

### **Tomb Raider and me**

Brown haired woman with a long braid, beige shorts and dual pistols falls into water. She is moving her hands as she tries not to sink down to the bottom of the freezing basin she fell in. I try to press the arrow buttons, but that only makes her change direction. I press another bunch of keys, alt being one of them. Yes she moves! But oh-oh, sharks! We got to escape. I frenetically combine all of the movement keys to make her swim away. Oops, I died. We are sitting in my friend's bedroom, playing games as usual. We are chatting, eating treats his mom brings us and discovering a new virtual world. Tomb Raider 2: The golden mask expansion.

It looked beautiful, the water effects, lighting, shadows, textures, models and animations, the vivid colours, all in glorious 3D. "It actually looks like she's swimming, the animation is fluent and the way the shark moves is just insanely cool," I pondered in my mind. The technological aspect was astonishing a marvel to behold. After countless deaths, we finally managed to use the ctrl key to climb from the icy lake. The controls were new to me. One thing is to press a button, the other to combine more of them and the hardest task is probably to press

one and hold the other, like you have to do it in TR. It's laughable now, but believe me, for little kids, it was a detective's work. We knew nothing about the game, the controls, its gameplay, goals, story or characters. We just pressed some buttons and anticipated magic to happen on the screen. We never got past the first area as far as I remember, but I was left with strong feeling that I want to explore more. What lies at the end of the cave? How could I get on top of that iceberg? Are there more enemies than just sharks? More weapons to use? How I wish I had owned the game so I could spend more time with it. But all I was left with were texture-less models, 320x240 resolution and a system crash following soon after. A few year later, after playing demos of TR3: The lost artefact and TR5: Chronicles at my friends' PCs, after countless discussions: "She dies in the fifth game," said my friend "No way!" I replied, I finally got a new PC and the game. Tomb Raider 4: The last revelation was the first instalment I owned, the first TR game I completed. I was lucky to stumble upon a copy. My grandmother gave me money for my birthday and it was just enough to buy the "Sold out" edition of The last revelation. It didn't have a fancy packaging but the disc was there. The bottom line for these first few paragraphs would be "sentiment." I played the game with my childhood best friend, the game took part in interaction with my other elementary school friends (chatting about the games, the movie, playing the game at their place) and I was given money to buy the first TR I have ever finished by my grandmother, who has sadly passed away too soon.

"That's what I bought granny," I told her as I was handing her out the plastic box. I was about twelve years old and so it was very hard to convince my family members that I bought the game because of the genre. What they saw was a woman stuffed in a tight green top that made her "two assets" seem like they were about to explode. Whoever decided to make her breasts even bigger than before, didn't think twice about Lara's reputation. How could a 12 year old boy, whose hormones were raging uncontrollably, explain that he will keep his hands only on the keyboard while playing the game? Fortunately, you get over the mockery sooner or later. Lara has been depicted as a sex symbol many times. She even graced the front page of the Playboy magazine once. In my opinion, the sexual aspect of her image has helped her to address larger audience. It helped her to traverse from games to magazines, commercials and even movies. The fact that Angelina Jolie played Lara made this part of her even more significant. What a stunning woman she is. I don't mind Lara being depicted as such, as long as she maintains the "look, but don't touch" attire. And you know what they said in Ancient Greece: "Mens sana in corpore sano," a healthy mind lies in a healthy body. I think it's a valid point.

The truth is that I play the franchise partially because of Lara, not just the genre. What is more interesting than her looks however, is her character, social-background and abilities. In short, she is intelligent, crafty, well-educated and knows the etiquette, while also being acrobatic, kick-ass, brave, persistent and composed in the most difficult situations at the same time. She represents the Greek ideal, body and mind. She has the action hero cool factor that makes her deeds seem impossible and absurd at times, but has also enough background story and emotions to make her seem real. How boring would it be if we didn't see her doing those crazy acrobatics and leaps of faith? Or what about those near-death situations when she escapes from a collapsing temple or a malfunctioning factory that is about to explode? I love the comic book elements in the franchise. Like Batman, she survived her own death. I honestly miss some of those aspects in the two newest instalments. She jumps less higher than she used to, she cannot do the aerial backflips anymore and she cannot jump and shoot at the same time. She feels heavier and more realistic now.

Even the locations have “suffered” from realism. The old temples show signs of their age. Instead of entering a fully furnished palace decorated with jewels and gold, you enter a ruin. If it was for realism, the whole fourth game would have been designed solely with washed out stone and tons of sand. The Cleopatra's palace you visit in Egypt, TR4, comes to my mind. You enter the area after exploring some less impressive environments, the hieroglyphs, decorated columns, bubbling fountains, palm trees and even the deadly trap system, are like a reward, like a secret you just uncovered, like something that has not been seen by humanity for decades. If it was done in the reboot series, it would not have been that impressive, despite the cutting edge graphics. The design elements of the new Rise of the Tomb Raider include: snow, eroded stone, washed out frescos, overgrown plants, moist wood, animal skin, corroded metals, and industrial toxic slush instead of water. Compare it to the Greek bathhouse stylization of the Neptune's room in TR: Anniversary, Chinese decor of Temple of Xian from Tomb Raider 2, or even the Egyptian oasis of City of Khamoon in TR 1, and you will be sorely disappointed. I miss those beautiful locations. In fact, that's the second reason I love the game. It's about those fantastic places that are more or less grounded in existing cultures. You learn about sights all around the world. You encounter different art styles, symbols, patterns, paintings, architecture, locations, historical figures and artefacts. You revisit the King Arthur myth in Tomb Raider Legend, learn what it is to have Damocles' blade hanging above your head in TR1 and get in touch with Mayan architecture in Tomb Raider Underworld. From sheer interest, you can visit the real Strahov in Czech Republic and see how it resembles the imagining from The Angel of

Darkness, check how well they modelled the temple of Karnak in The Last revelation or take trip to Venice and see if they truly have those gondolas on streets, like in TR2. It's bright, colourful and varied. What I love about the games is the variety. For a few levels, you roam the temples in China, see a Great wall and encounter monks, next time you know, you find yourself in an Indian jungle, dodging cobras while trying to avoid quicksand, then you visit Kazakhstan and encounter some Tesla technology and electricity based puzzles, or Japan which is even more high-tech and offers tall buildings to climb. The environment changes, the mood changes, the gameplay slightly alters, there are new puzzles to solve, new enemies to fight and a new costume for Lara to wear. I love this variety, it keeps the game interesting all the way.

Also, you venture into those locations alone. Usually there is a complete silence in the first five games unless you trigger an event (you encounter an enemy, solve a puzzle or activate a trap). It's just you in an abandoned area. The Angel of Darkness introduced Lara's commentary on certain occasions, she gives you hints and comments on the events. Tomb Raider Legend expanded that feature and introduced a constant radio stream with your two friends Zip and Alistair. They talk all the time, you rarely get the feeling of being isolated. The sequel (story wise, it's a prequel), Anniversary, brought the complete silence back. It's probably my most favourite post-Core TR. You find yourself in Peruvian caves, there's a big waterfall with an ancient mechanism of flood gate. You hear the water fall, the wooden structure of the mechanism crackle, you can experience howling before the wolves attack you. It's about the ambient hum that is in no way distracting and which helps your brain to paint the rest of the environment that wasn't visualized by game's designers. I like ambient, downtempo, trip-hop and trance music, because they set the cogs of my imagination in motion. The sound effects make the location seem bigger, every bullet hit harder and Lara's jumps seem tougher to perform. Tomb Raider is the only title for which I always turn the volume up while playing. What about my parents and neighbours? I don't care. I am playing the new Tomb Raider for god's sake and I need to hear Lara make that "ha...hmmmmph" sound every time she jumps and climbs a ledge or "Aaaaaaaa" when she falls into a bottomless pit. And don't let me start about the rumbling bass that shakes your desk as some big stone door opens in the game, or when a wall trap slowly grinds Lara into a pulp. Sound effects are a must.

I would also like to dedicate a paragraph to Lara's interaction with the environment. One of the standout features of the TR franchise are the animations. Lara has weight and you can nearly smell her sweat when she pushes that heavy block out of the way. The animations create the immersion in my eyes. However buggy AOD might have been, it did one thing



excellently, the animations. When you climb a fence or a wall you see that Lara really tries. At that moment it could be you climbing that fence. You unconsciously increase the pressure you put on the key on your keyboard, as you want to make sure she doesn't fall. You nearly get up from your chair when you make that impossible jump. You press the fire button mercilessly when you are finally given the chance to kill the main villain. Your immersion matters, and those animations synchronise with my mind if not with my body. How many times I have wished I had learned how to do those gymnastics. Was it because I was fat and incompetent at any movement at all? Was it an unspoken wish to be more agile? Maybe it was, maybe it still is. My physique has improved a lot, but I am still stiff as a plank of wood. And I have a persistent feeling that I won't be able to achieve any better, at least not in this life. Maybe it's the only way to experience those acrobatics. And remember how I wrote about the building climbing in the beginning of the self-reflection? I actually do that. I often look at buildings and objects, thinking how they could be possibly climbed. What does it mean? I think it's a wish for freedom, the freestyle technique of parkour is like a simulation of flying. You are weightless, without anything pulling you down. Sometimes I wish I could put my shoes on and run around freely, jumping from all those bad thoughts and problems.

The timing of the button press matters, your skill at holding the button, even when you got cramps from the all day long gaming, is essential. It tests your reflexes and let me tell you, those quick time events in the two reboot games happen at an insane pace. "Run Lara! The bridge is collapsing underneath your feet." The music and the story context of the situation make you put an extra effort into controls. That's what those newer Tomb Raider games do well. They combine those scenes where you barely breathe and try not to die. The music does an impressive job even though we don't realize it. When your friend Jonah gets into trouble in the Rise of Tomb Raider, you run for his rescue. You still have as much as time as you would like to have. You could probably stand on the spot for half an hour and you still would not get a game over. Yet you know it's Lara's friend and they are going to hurt him, maybe even kill him, if you don't hurry up. The music gets fast, nervous and gains in scale, its movie-like quality signals that something important is happening right now, it drives you forward. The opposite would be the lazy ambient music playing in Croft manor in Legend and Anniversary. It makes you feel relaxed, it is Lara's manor, and it's a safe place to be, take your time and enjoy the puzzles. The soundtrack of those two titles is excellent and I have been listening to those track even outside the game. The ambient music that starts to play when you see the waterfalls in Ghana for the first time is pure magic. It's an orchestra, but very gentle, the high tones tell you

how beautiful and delicate the nature is there, those flowers, butterflies and birds, while the bass underlines the roughness and ruthlessness of the jungle. When you encounter a boss of that level, fast paced action music pleases your ears, but it still manages to keep the African vibe intact. The other standout track would be the electronica that plays in Japan. Japan and electronics, it's like strawberries and cream. The other one I recall would be the Egyptian theme that pops up when you encounter centaurs in Anniversary. It sounds like something lifted from The mummy soundtrack, using all Egyptian instruments you could have hoped for. I love the music of the franchise. The main theme that has been preserved in one form or another over the franchise's history depicts the game well. The harp makes beautiful sounds, just as beautiful as the locations you visit.

The game is about exploration, about revelation. This is fortified by the fact that you have to solve environmental puzzles to progress. You have to press a button from time to time, pick a key and use it on the right door, push an object to a pressure pad, shoot a specific spot, collect, combine and use the right items at the right place. It keeps your brain busy. Later instalments added the joy of physics to the game, widening the possible variety of riddles. I love riddles! And I feel a strong sense of achievement when I solve them, without any hints. And believe me, some puzzles in the older games require a lot of time and are quite tricky. And there are so many types of them, so much creativity put into making your brain overheat.

You know what gives you even stronger sense of accomplishment than solving a riddle that obviously blocks your progress? A secret! A hidden area that rewards its discoverer with a reward. Sometimes it can be as simple as ammo, med kit or a new weapon. But the real treats are the relics. They are connected with the environment you are currently in or tied to the story in some way or another. For example, In TR2 you collect jade dragon statues (the final level and boss are Chinese), in Chronicles you collect golden roses (symbol of mourning), and in Tomb Raider Anniversary all of the relics are culture specific and vary from level to level. In Greece you can collect an owl statue as a symbol of Athena, the goddess of war and wisdom. In Egypt you collect a mummified cat relic, which reminds us how Egyptians took care of their dead, and an idol of Horus, the god of the sky. Writing this made me realize how much I love Greek and Egyptian culture. When there's a Greek or Egyptian level, it's always my favourite. Maybe that's why I love the first game and its remaster so much. What makes secrets different from puzzles is, that there is usually no hint about their presence. The game lets you progress without a notification saying that you have just missed a secret. I dare to say that most people don't find all secrets on their first play-through, even when they try hard. When I reflect

on this revelation phenomena I get a strong feeling that I yearn to uncover world's secrets. I wish I could create an invention, introduce something new and revolutionary to the world. I wish I could figure out something that would matter, something that would change my life and give it a clear course. Do I want this for myself only? Yes there's something oddly selfish about claiming that one of a kind artefact while destroying the whole tomb in the process. You are special, you solved the puzzle and now you have the trophy to show to the world. You took a place in the history of the mankind. The other side of the coin would be uncovering something that would help the whole world and that would not be bad either. In fact it's the better option.

The realism has befallen on Lara's character too. The full motion video, hefty in-game cut scenes, Lara's own commentary and story logs provide much insight into her personality. Back then, she was basically a tabula rasa, an empty vessel who didn't talk too much, yet managed to keep personality through looks and actions. When you did not make the very few FMV's to work, due to technical issues, there was little known about the story and Lara at all. You could project yourself into her. In newer games, everything is explained in detail, there's little room for imagination. Story and dialogues have depth, just like Lara. She's no longer the classic comic book hero, with rigid set of features and mysterious back story. Instead, she is more fluid as a character, she evolves, and lets player know her past and present motives. In the newer games she approaches her enemies with caution, often regretting the loss of lives. In the old ones, she approaches an enemy, shoots him with a laugh on her face and makes it seem very cool. I prefer Lara from the Legend-Anniversary-Underworld trilogy, as she balances the comic hero aspects with realism. The new, young, rebooted Lara seems way too strained by her human limits and the laws of physics. What I like about her though, is that she provides even more insight into her behaviour. We see a wide array of emotions, sadness, anger, frustration and joy. She gives me something to connect to. And as far as the series got, I still find her likeable. But can others say the same when she got clearly defined from every human angle possible? Besides, her looks have changed so much I can barely recognize her, especially in the reboot series. Long gone is the long braid, shorts and dual pistols. Instead we got a ponytail, trousers and a pickaxe. Combine it with the previous text about her personality and you can see the width of her development. So why do I like Lara? I guess I would like to be as intelligent, brave, emancipated, agile, well-traveled and let's be honest as sexy and rich as her. I cannot believe I just wrote that. The rules set by the first paragraph of the self-reflection are harsh indeed.

The last thing I would like to mention is the explicit content. The franchise is not exactly violent but includes weapons, blood and murder, animals included. The reboot series introduced

a level of realism that some people may consider unsettling. You experience Lara's first kill in detail, you watch her get injured, often breaking her limbs, getting crushed or impaled, you witness a torture and also shoot and skin animals for resources. It has to be noted that it doesn't happen from time to time, but very frequently. The increased realism in Lara's interaction with her environment comes at that cost. It is as if they tried to preserve those impressive superhero feats like near-death jumps, bombastic escapes, climbing unreal heights, fighting large groups of enemies and miraculous survival skills, but had to make Lara suffer in order to make it more real. Sometimes it was too much for my taste, she falls and screams all the time. The frequency of her getting injured is ridiculous, and is sometimes very uncomfortable to observe. I also often felt that she got too weak. She's Lara Croft, she should storm into the battle and KO everybody in sight without breaking a nail. Instead, she crawls, moans and hides in the corner. I don't know how to feel about that, even though she's in her teenage years during the reboot and may seem extraordinarily brave from that angle. The gore in the first nine games can be considered average, and any criticism in that manner could be lifted against the whole gaming industry. Animal killing has always been present in the franchise and the only time you were given the option to use non-lethal ammo was in TR Underworld. I used it during my gameplay, because I don't see Lara as a murderer, I see her as scholar, she uses those guns to defend herself. In comparison to the older games, where the animal models were blocky and poorly textured, the newer games make them seem more alive. I had a big problem killing deer, rabbits and even bears in The Rise of the Tomb Raider. The sound effects and animations are really convincing and since we have a little bunny at home, I felt really bad after shooting one in the game. And what's worse, the game forces you to do so, unlike the previous instalment that had this feature too. The strange thing about it is that I don't have problems killing human enemies in the game, but when it comes to animals it's a different thing. One of the reasons why I feel like this is that animals cannot really defend themselves. I see them as little kids who just don't understand the things we, humans, do. They follow their instincts, get scared and fight for their lives when they feel endangered, which results in their inevitable death. The intention is not to hurt you, the intention is to survive and we should be wiser to know that. We should try to protect them, just like we protect little kids. People, on the other hand, often choose their path willingly. And if somebody takes part in an evil organization that tries to destroy the world, who justify murder and torture as a mean to "do the god's will", then he deserves that arrow in the head, like the main villain Constantine in TRoTR. It took me half a second to decide about his fate. Bottom line for violence would be that it's a part of the game. It's an action-puzzle adventure, the shooting needs to be present. Bad guys need to be neutralized, but I don't have to see their guts

getting spilled in HD. Neither do I have to hear Lara's bones getting broken or see her slowly pulling off a wooden stake that just penetrated her ribs. As with animals, I would prefer the tranquilizer gun from the ninth instalment.

As far as the explicit content goes, I don't mind swearing. Lara should swear only in the most critical situations to make them feel more intense. If I saw my friend getting killed or my mum getting kidnapped, I would swear in every single sentence. Most of the time, I prefer her using the dry British humour and irony to make her foes even more angry.

In summary I have a sentimental bond with the game. It's tied to my childhood, friends and relatives. I like Lara Croft and would probably support her even outside of the Tomb Raider games, should some crossover or spin off happen. She represents both brains and brawn, she is perceived as a sex symbol and is often capable of impressive feats, on par with comic book heroes. The game's lore includes fantasy aspects but is also connected to the real world cultures and mythology. Locations are based on reality but offer enough space for creative reimagining that's both educational and spectacular. Treasures and relics are scattered through levels, waiting to be found, often hidden behind logical puzzles that test your wits. The areas are spacy, giving you the opportunity to explore and feel the solitary ambiance. Immersion with the environment is deepened by sound effects and fluent animations that make you feel engaged in every movement Lara makes. The realism has been refined in newer sequels and includes some contents that could be perceived as explicit. But as for the series overall, the violence is very manageable and revolves mainly around ranged pistol combat. Storyline involves supernatural elements, villains who want to destroy the world and the immortal struggle for treasure, fame and inner satisfaction. Music plays an important role, it motivates the player to progress and notifies in case of an in-game event. The games are about action and exploration, accompanied by a story with a classic villain archetype and presented from a perspective of the main heroine who has to save the day.

### **Questions that were lifted from the TR self-reflection**

#### **Tomb Raider and sentiments**

Do TR fans have any sentimental connections to the franchise? What's their story with the game?



### **Lara Croft, the sex icon**

What stance do they have towards Lara's sex appeal? Why do they think that Lara is portrayed like that? Do they enjoy her being depicted as such? Did some of the players decide to try the game because they considered Lara to be attractive? Do they think the sex aspect is an essential part of her persona? What is the ideal level of "sexiness" in Tomb Raider? What is the ideal look for Lara? Have fans ever engaged in cosplay? How do they feel about playing an opposite sex?

### **Lara Croft, the hero**

What personality traits and skills does Lara have in the eyes of fans? What personality traits and skills they wish she had? What makes Lara so interesting and special, what makes her the gaming icon she is today? Would you play a spin off game with her? Do fans prefer her being close to a superhero or human in terms of abilities? How do they rate her abilities in the reboot series? What emotions do they wish Lara to express, and which not? Do players look up to Lara in any way? Would they like to have any of her traits or skills? Do they share a trait or a skill with Lara?

### **Storytelling**

Does the story matter in the TR franchise? What story the players prefer the most? What should be the main theme? What themes should be avoided? What is the most memorable event in the franchise? Would they make some changes to the story's progress and Lara's decisions? Do players enjoy the expanded storytelling in the post Chronicles games? What frequency of in-game cut scenes is ideal? Do they enjoy Lara's and/or her companions' commentary during the gameplay? Why is that so? Do players look for a solitary feeling when they play the game?

### **Sights and cultures**

What are the favourite/least favourite locations in TR franchise? What makes them good/bad? Have they ever skipped/rushed a level because of its ambiance? Are the levels supposed to be realistic or to include fantasy elements? Do they enjoy the locations based on reality rather than the made up ones? Do players prefer specific cultures to be in TR? Have they ever encountered their culture to be portrayed in the series? Did it make the gameplay more enjoyable? Are players striving for a career that is somehow connected to the franchise? Do they look for an in-depth mono-cultural environment or for multiple cultures and venues in TR?

Do they like an open world scheme or singular levels? Why? What type of level structure is the most favourite (hub, multiple path, single path)?

### **Game mechanics and features**

What is the main reason to play a TR game? Do players try/play the game because of its technological features? What are the most significant associations with the series? What game mechanics do players enjoy the most/ the least? What features are missing? Should the game be more action or puzzle oriented? What type of puzzle is the best? How do players perceive their difficulty? Are TR players more educated than others? Do the TR fans use any hints and walkthroughs to make the game easier? Do players enjoy collecting secrets? Why is the key to their appeal? How does the ideal secret look like? What should Lara do with the treasure? Do players enjoy quick time events? Why? How do players rate the in game animations? Do they have an impact on the games immersion? Is there a specific animation they enjoy? Have they ever tried to replicate Lara's moves? Do the players consider themselves to be "fit"?

### **Music and sound effects**

How do the fans rate the music in TR? Does it have an impact on the gameplay experience? What type of music is the best (orchestra vs. ambient hum or their combination)? Does it have to be connected to the culture currently explored? What's the preferred mood? Have the players ever listened to the games soundtrack outside the game? Are the players able to recall a music track spontaneously? What is their favourite? Do sound effects matter? What is the players' most favourite sound effect in the game?

### **Explicit content**

How do gamers rate the violence level in TR? Do they prefer the comic book approach or the savage realism of the reboot? How do the players evaluate the explicit content in the reboot? Is an armed conflict important to the gameplay? Is mele combat preferred over ranged? Why? Should Lara avoid, tackle or even endorse conflict? Do fans see Lara as an aggressor? Is murder justifiable? What is the stance of the community towards animal killing? Would Lara kill an animal? Is it OK for Lara to swear? If so, under what circumstances?

## Appendix 2: Introductory video transcript

Hello everybody my name is Martin and I am here to uncover one of the greatest mysteries Tomb Raider has ever seen and that's TRF.

### The TRF research

And with the blessing of penguin almighty, our administrator [*picture with administrator's avatar is shown on a heavenly backdrop with holy choir singing*], let us commence.

### What is this about?

As many of you know, the only way to finish your studies is to pass the final examination and also present your final thesis. Well, and unless you bribe somebody [*video of Lara interrogating one of the series antagonists is shown*] then you have to conduct your own research and present findings [*video of Lara commanding her team to publish findings of her research*].

As a student of Marketing and business, I picked two theories that were closest to my heart and these were relationship marketing and netnography [*book covers of Fournier's Consumer Brand relationships and Kozinets' Netnography redefined are shown*]. And as the names suggest, the relationship marketing is about relationships and netnography deals with online socialization.

So why am I telling you all of this, well it's because I am asking for your help. Without your input, my research has no chance to properly take off [*viral video of a little girl landing on her face after commanding her dog to go plays*].

Just as Lara needs to find tombs and relics to prove her theories, I need to find answers for some of the questions I came up when I self-reflect on Tomb Raider means to me, as a person [*video of Lara finding out her father was right with his research plays in the background*]. If you are interested in my story with Tomb Raider and video games, you can read it in the attached PDF, which starts with my childhood and continues to this very day.

### Why TR and TRF?

So why did I pick Tomb Raider forums and Tomb Raider series? Well it's because I have been a community member since 2006. I know I haven't been quite active in the last few years, but I am still a fan of Tomb Raider and I have been a fan since elementary school. That's at least 16 years out of my 24 years long life.

I still remember playing Tomb Raider for the first time. It was Tomb Raider II: The golden mask [*gameplay video of the first few moments of The golden mask plays in the background*]. And I remember the

scene where you fall into the ice cold water and I tried to figure out the controls while being eaten by sharks at the same time. I thought it was hilarious, but it was very engaging at the same time to try to figure it out yourself.

The game immediately linked with me, because I am a person who enjoys uncovering mysteries and solving puzzles [*gameplay footage of Lara timing her movements to dodge deadly, spinning blades plays*], who also enjoys the beauty and the colour our world has to offer [*camera flies through Cleopatra's palaces level in TRIV, mysterious music plays along*] and also I love this ambient, atmospheric music [*one of the first FMV cut scenes in TRAoD plays, featuring professional, theatrical score*]. And then later in the series, it even had emotional story to tell [*video of Lara killing human for the first time in the TR reboot is shown, with full audio*] and also it was about this slight OCD need to collect every item and I can quite relate to that [*barrage of shots of Lara picking up many items in TRV plays, with original audio changed to parody obsession with possession. This ends with "Technical difficulties, please stand by" screen and a complementary, beeping sound*].

Besides, it had this kickass female as the main character, who had not been surpassed until Janice happened. [*Cut scene of Lara theatrically descending from a cliff and shooting pack wolves in TR1 plays. This is followed by modded version of TRAoD, where one of the NPCs, Janice, shoots pack of policemen in the game's first level instead of Lara. "Technical difficulties, please stand by" screen plays again, with the same, beeping sound*].

### **The goal of this research?**

As for the research topic, we can ask ourselves who is Lara, how do you see her and, also, how would you like her to be? Maybe, maybe like Kardashians? [*short and creepy video of Kardashian sisters replying "thank you" to some TV reporters, in a robotic-like fashion, is shown*] Let's not do this again OK? I promise I won't.

The second question is what makes Tomb Raider so appealing? Is it the graphics? Is it the thrill of exploration [*footage of Lara screaming as she falls into a lava pit is shown, with full audio*], or, maybe, is it the freedom of movement? [*Chariots of fire by Vangelis plays to be interrupted abruptly as Lara locks her butler into a freezer*].

And the third question is, what are your stances towards video games and video game industry in general?

### **How can you help me?**

So, what am I asking you to do? Well, for most of the time, nothing special. What are doing, here, now, is what I need you to do and is what interests me as a researcher [*random posts in a thread, relevant to*

*the research, are put on screen*]. But from time to time, besides your discussions that you spontaneously have among yourselves, I can set up a thread and spark a discussion on something very specific. So, if you give me your opinion from time to time, it would be perfect.

Besides your opinions and quotes, I will need to collect some quantitative data, because that's the requirement. You know, economists and their tables and graphs, they totally love it. I would collect these with anonymous questionnaires, but the thing is that it will be so not specific and it will be done at such a scale that it cannot be linked or traced back to you. It is much more about me having some numbers, like where are you from in general, what's the share of male and female fans of TR, here on TRF, or what do you think about DLC on a scale from 1 to 10. It won't be anything that could be tracked back to you, it will be done at scale and one respondent means one line in a big datasheet.

### **The method?**

Netnography, the research method I am going to use, is very qualitative in a way that I will go through each thread that has something to do with my research and I will look at your opinions, your thoughts, and then I will try to look at sentences and try to decompose them into parts and think about what is your stance towards the topic, what is your opinion. If you are being positive about things, or negative, if you support this idea, or this idea. It is more about my subjective interpretation of what you think.

If I find an interesting quote that you posted, you say something really interesting that could be worth researching, then I may ask you to make the message more clear by sending you PM, asking: "did you mean it this way or that way?" and then it is up to you if you reply me back [*interesting quote from a relevant thread is shown*]. I cannot force you into anything, but this is how it works.

For each thread, I would like to do a word cloud. So we will see what the general mood for that topic you are talking about is.

The other thing that pops into your mind, I bet, is the data usage and personal information storage. And yes, netnography has a set of ethical rules that are used for conducting this research that I need to follow and want to follow. As with questionnaires, as I have said before, they will be done at mass scale, there is no linkage to you back. It will be just global statistics, global moods, global opinions and it is enough, because only somebody who is interested in the series would register here. So it is fine for me to not to know the person specifically, but he/she is part of the community, so that's why he/she can fill the questionnaire.

Secondly, there are these quotations and that's a different story. If I find your post interesting and would like to quote it in my thesis, then I will need to ask you, under any circumstances, for your permission to include it in my work. I can send you a PM, asking you: "Can I use your quote? Because I think it is interesting and I think it summarizes the opinion here well. Can I use it in my thesis?".



Then there are three scenarios with this. The first scenario is that I will send you a PM, asking you if I can publish the quote in my thesis. You will say: “yeah, I stand by this quote” and I will include your nick and the quote, as it is. The second option is that I will write you a PM and you will tell me: “OK, I stand by this opinion, but you know, I wouldn’t like to be tracked back, because it is somehow sensitive to me and I wouldn’t like my nickname to be printed there” so then I can create a nickname for your nickname [*Xzhibit meme is shown*] and also I can change the sentence so it won’t be traceable back. The third option, of course, is that I will ask for your permission and you will say that you don’t want to be included in the thesis and that’s fine [*Grumpy cat meme pops up*]. Also, when you give me the permission, you can back of at any time, unless it’s already published, then it would be quite hard not to include it there you know. Just write me a message that you don’t want your quote to be included. I want to make this as transparent as possible.

Please note that I gave my honest word to Justin that I won’t interview any people who are under 18 years of age, so if you are a minor, please ignore my messages.

As for the data storage, the thesis will be uploaded to my school’s online library. [*DSPACE website appears on screen, as the place of data storage*] But only people who are members of my school can access it. The second thing about it is that the thesis can be cut, so some content can be left out. If you find that there is something, and I say we because you can give me feedback, that you wouldn’t like to be published online for people from my school to see, then we can cut it out from the thesis. The people who will see the full version is the leader of my thesis, then it’s the opponent, who will grade me, and then four people in commission who have like 5 minutes to read through it, so I don’t think that’s a problem. So only two people will see the full thing, no more.

And also, I would like to upload the whole thesis, so you will see whole methodology, the theoretical background, you will see everything that I wrote, how this thing worked, so you will see the results. And I will upload it here, on TRF, so you can see what I came up with. And I also plan to make it nice, so there will be some infographics, my commentary on this and a summary.

### **What’s in it for me?**

So what’ in it for you? Well, besides those interesting results of the research, I thought about giving you something extra, because I think that will be appropriate if you give me your time and that you participate. At first I thought that I could buy you a copy of some ultimate edition with all of those TR games, but then I thought that there is a high probability that you already own these. [*author holds a copy of Tomb Raider: Ultimate edition in his hands*] So, I came with something different and my gift to you would be 10 10 Euro vouchers for Steam and they will be issued on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month and I will do the draw in Microsoft Excel with the random number function. So, anyone who joins any topic that I am researching, will be part of

the draw. I will include your nick and generate random numbers and the first ten with the lowest or highest numbers get the prize.

## FAQ

At the end, let's make a quick FAQ session. Question number one: "Who the hell are you?" My name is Martin Šugra and I live in city called Ostrava, in Czech Republic, with my parents, still, and I am in my last semester of master studies at a school that is really hard to pronounce in English, so here's the logo and the faculty [*screenshot of author's university's website is shown, with the logo of the university and faculty*]. Right now I am in Vienna, in Austria, as an exchange student, for one semester. I am here in this gorgeous city and would love to go sightseeing, so it is very tempting not to sit here and do a research. But still, it is beautiful and I wish you were here.

Question number two: "Do you work for Square Enix?" Well, the answer is [*"NO" sound effect from TR1 plays, accompanied by picture of Lara's serious face*].

The thirds question is: "Do you work for some greedy company or marketing agency?" The answer is no. I haven't worked for any of those companies yet and I don't plan to do so. If you want to see my professional background, you can check my LinkedIn account. I have left a link below this video, so you can check it out.

Question number four: "How can I give you hugs or show you my middle finger?" Well, the easiest way to do this is to reply to this very thread, or you can send me a PM and the third option is to send me an e-mail at [martin.sugra@atlas.cz](mailto:martin.sugra@atlas.cz). [*e-mail address is shown on screen as author mentions it*] I will read them and I'll respond you back.

Question number five: "Do you know that most people hate marketing?" Well, to be frank, partially, I hate marketing too and especially those stupid commercials that always pop up when... [Author gets interrupted by a commercial for Dreamcast version of TRIV]. What I believe is that you can do marketing differently than with interruption and those annoying banners and commercials, I totally hate them. This is more about relationship marketing, so it's about a two-way relationship that, in the end, makes the product more enjoyable for the customer. It's more about listening to your consumers and giving them a better product, just like CD Projekt Red does it with Witcher 3, I think that's a good example and that's where I would like to head.

The last question is: "What do you gain from all of this?" Hopefully, I will get a good grade and the inner feeling of satisfaction that I managed to do something new, because I haven't recorded video before. It is just something new for me, the netnography and relationship marketing. I thought it was interesting, so let's see how this works out.

Thank you so much for watching, make sure to hit the subscribe button below, no just kidding. But thank you for watching anyway and I hope that this research will have a better start than this [*Girl, falling on her face is shown again*]. If you have any questions feel free to contact me any time and, you know, I don't want to cause any false expectations [*re-dubbed scene from TRL plays, comparing false expectation to ordering a Big Mac at KFC*]. If there's anything else you would like to know, just send me a message.

I hope you enjoyed this as much as I did and may the Janice be with you [*author makes "J" symbol with his fingers, which is followed by modded TRaD footage, where Janice slides down a roof and dies. The grotesque Spanish fly track from Herb Alpert plays until the ending screen pops up, stating "THE END... seriously"*]

### Appendix 3: Online investigation about TR and Lara Croft

The **official website** was informative if anything else. It relied on and promoted the last two reboot titles. (TombRaider, 2016) As such, words like “**vital**”; “**high-octane**”, “hostile”, “**expedition**” and “**discovery**” were used to describe the game, linking it with thrilling, survival action adventure. The art gallery only underlines the **survival** and **exploration** aspects as is shown in Figure 10-1. Similarly, video section includes videos labelled as “woman vs. wild” and “Siberian **wilderness**”.

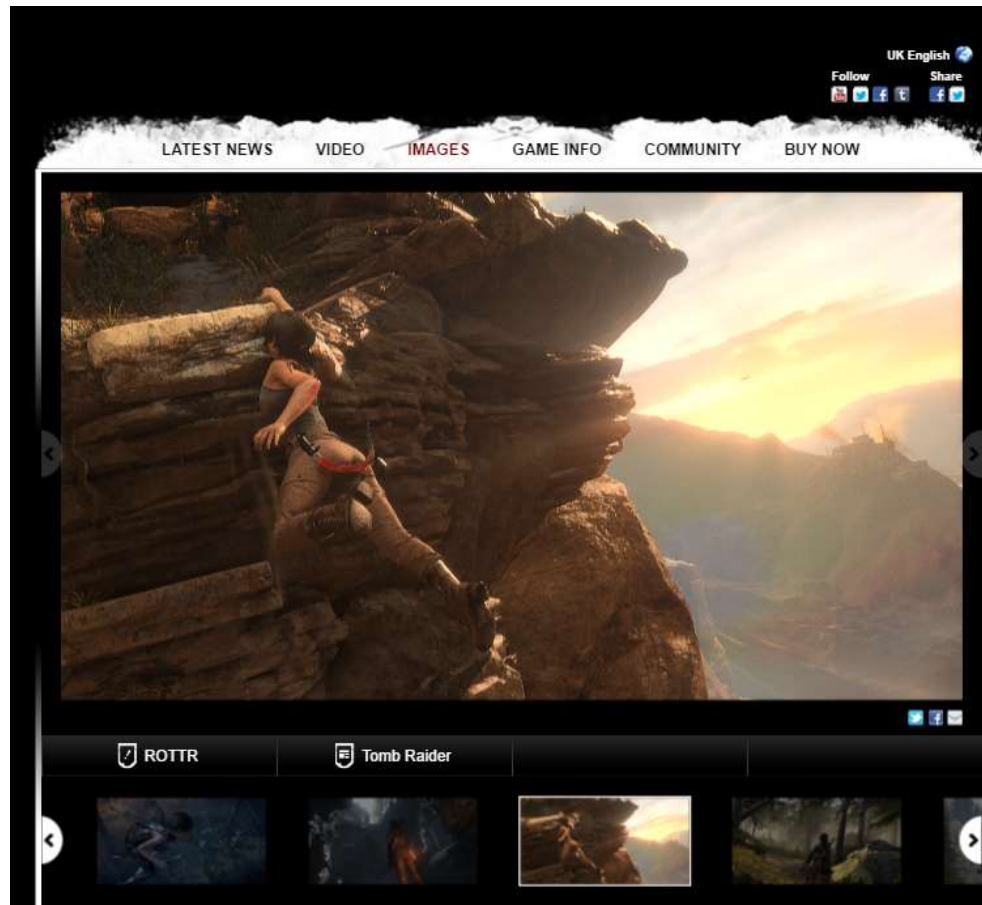


Figure 10-1: Screenshot from the official TR web

Content of the **fan art** section may be created by fans, but surely is moderated by officials. It fits the overall survival theme with titles such as: “**Against the Elements**”; “**Survive**”; or “**Hope**”. Lara is often pictured as **injured**, in the middle of **exploration**, whether it is uncovering new sites, entering a **cave**, **swimming**, or **shooting** from a bow, as demonstrated with Figure 10-2. Image description praises Lara’s **strength**, **resilience**, **resistance**, **independence** and **bravery**. Through Facebook, Twitter, or Google, visitors could leave a message in a discussion which highly revolved around technical support for the latest games.

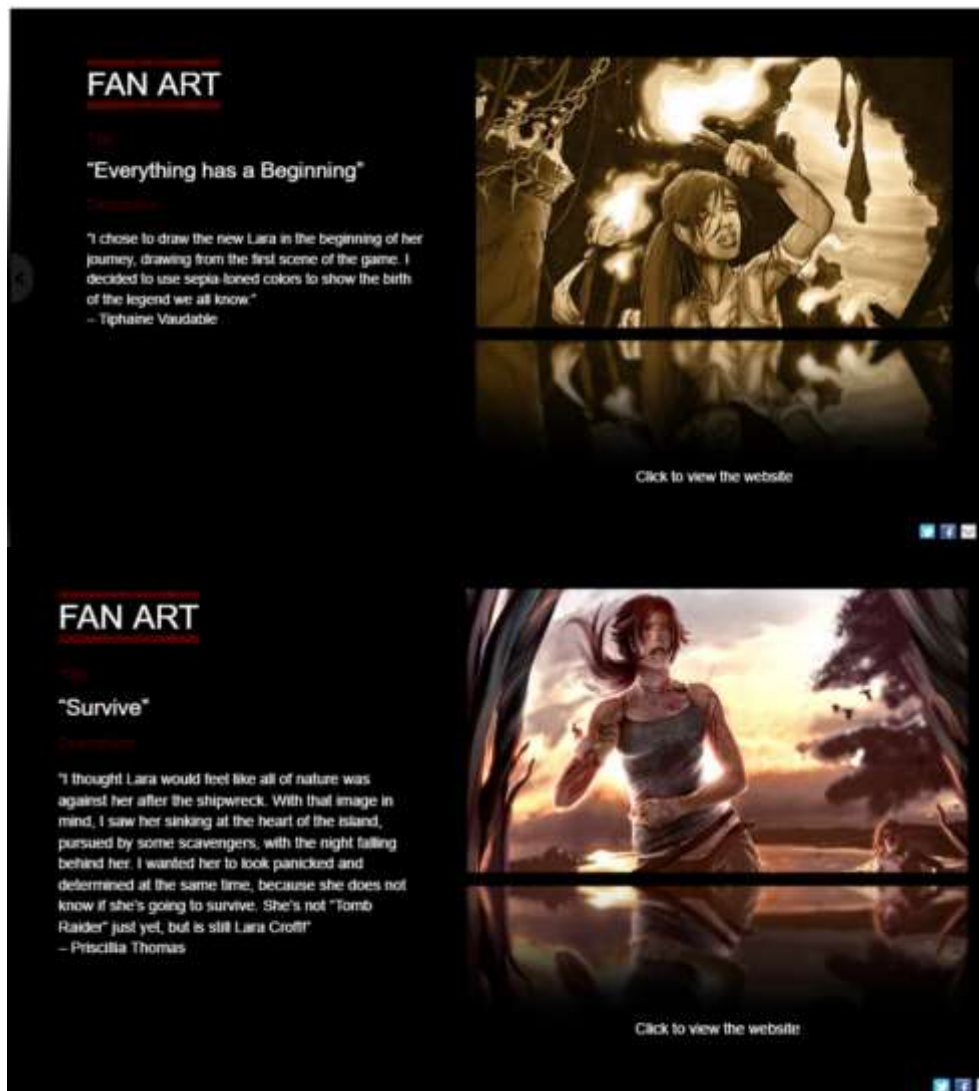


Figure 10-2: TR fan art on the official TR website

Wikipedia (2016), a community built, online, knowledge data base mentions TR as an **action-adventure video game**. Unlike the official site, Wiki format is built to describe the game from every angle. As such, the site mentions **puzzles, exploration, traps, and enemies** as one of the gameplay mechanics; **sex appeal** as one of the marketing tools; **artefacts, environments, ruins** and **supernatural** as game's material environment; and labels Lara as **aristocratic, intelligent, athletic** and **elegant**, while also describing her signature looks (**braid, tank top, shorts, backpack, twin pistols**). Connections to celebrities (actress **Angelina Jolie**) and other fictional characters (**Indiana Jones**) are made as well. Not only that, Lara and TR are labelled as **legendary**, award winning and **record bearing** in terms of popular culture, as depicted in Figure 10-3.

*Tomb Raider*, styled as *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* between 2001 and 2007, is a **media franchise** that originated with an **action-adventure** video game series created by British gaming company **Core Design**. Formerly owned by **Eidos Interactive**, then by **Square Enix** after their acquisition of Eidos in 2009, the franchise focuses on the **archaeologist-adventurer Lara Croft**, who travels the globe searching for lost artifacts and infiltrating dangerous tombs and ruins. The character was created by a team at Core Design that included **Toby Gard**. The gameplay generally focuses around action-adventure exploration of environments, solving puzzles, navigating hostile environments filled with traps, and fighting numerous enemies.



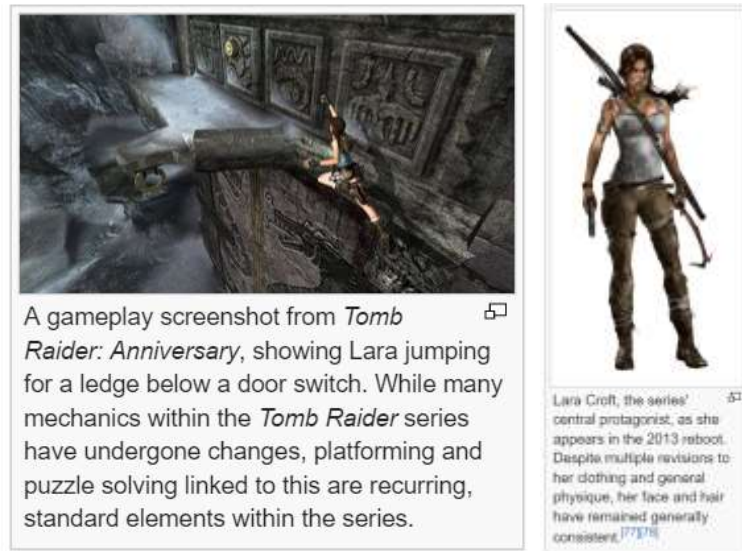


Figure 10-3: Description of TR franchise on Wikipedia, the world's favourite encyclopedia

**Steam** (2013) gaming platform takes fifth and sixth spots in the search query's results. The first title in the reboot series is listed under "**Action games**". **Survivor** theme is mentioned again, as well as the word "**ascent**" which was referred to in previous fan art and is aimed directly at Lara's **tough** and **self-evolving persona**. Same is reflected in user's comments that circulate around Lara's **toughness**; **sex appeal**; **action**; **adventure**; **classic/nostalgia**; detailed **graphics** and **deep atmosphere**. The image is consistent and elements of survival are placed next to the classic **adventuring**, **gunplay** and **puzzle solving**. Some members labelled the **reboot** as **emotionally engaging** and cared for Lara's faith throughout the game, which is confirmed by one of the official reviews shown. Some highlights are seen in Figure 10-4.



# TOMB RAIDER

Tomb Raider explores the intense origin story of Lara Croft and her ascent from a young woman to a hardened survivor.

User reviews:  
 RECENT: **Overwhelmingly Positive** (823 reviews)  
 OVERALL: **Overwhelmingly Positive** (53,230 reviews)

Release Date: 5 Mar, 2013

Popular user-defined tags for this product:

Adventure Action Female Protagonist Lara Croft +



**Whiteswart**  
 1,424 products in account  
 139 reviews



**Recommended**  
 75.6 hrs on record

Posted: 8 May

Yet another Croft girl. We've seen them quite a lot from the time the first game of this franchise was released, and "re-boot" of the year 2013 was not the first one. However, it is still a 3rd-person view action/adventure game with female heroine, who knows her ways around archeology and survival in the "Indiana Jones style". And, it is a good game, even if flawed a little, but quite decent overall.



**ChrisP**  
 530 products in account  
 19 reviews



**Recommended**  
 4.1 hrs on record

Posted: 5 May

A wonderful reboot to an already classic franchise. 2013's Tomb Raider was a most pleasant surprise to all fans of the series. When we talk of reboots in general, we get mixed feelings since nostalgia plays an important role. Not to mention that most video game reboots lack in both quality and scope. Not the case with this game. It captures the essence of Lara Croft and delivers a compelling origin story to one of gaming's strongest female characters. It is an experience that must be played at some point by any self respecting gamer.



**Iron666**  
 127 products in account  
 33 reviews



**Recommended**  
 21.7 hrs on record

Posted: 19 May

My girlfriend caught me screenshoting Laras ♥♥♥♥, now I don't have a girlfriend.

4.5/10 "... if you're a gamer, you should play Tomb Raider. It combines high-levels of interactivity, excellent pacing, and a true bond between the player and the character on screen. " - Game Revolution

Figure 10-4: Steam page for Tomb Raider (2013), with game description and reviews

Official **YouTube** account followed, but author decided to search for Tomb Raider manually instead. The first video listed in the search results presented first part of a **walkthrough** series for RotTR (YouTube, 2015). The footage is adventurous, set in an **extreme environment**, **graphically impressive** and interwoven with **story**. Lara has to resist the **hostile** setting, be physically **strong** to perform climbing **acrobatics** and be **brave** to proceed and

not to faint from the great heights and the fact that ground collapses underneath her feet. The video included interesting comments regarding graphics, linkage to **Uncharted series** (comparisons are made, just like on Steam) and Lara's **sex appeal**. Interestingly, three comments listed on top were **criticizing the reboot** stating that (compared to the originals) **Lara's too talkative**; **environments** are meant to be **peaceful and quiet**; the game is **too easy** and **doesn't require players to think**, as seen in Figure 10-5. Four comments then refer to the series' **past and tradition**. Author touched all the categories in his own self-reflection and it is obvious that they play a major role in TR's positioning.

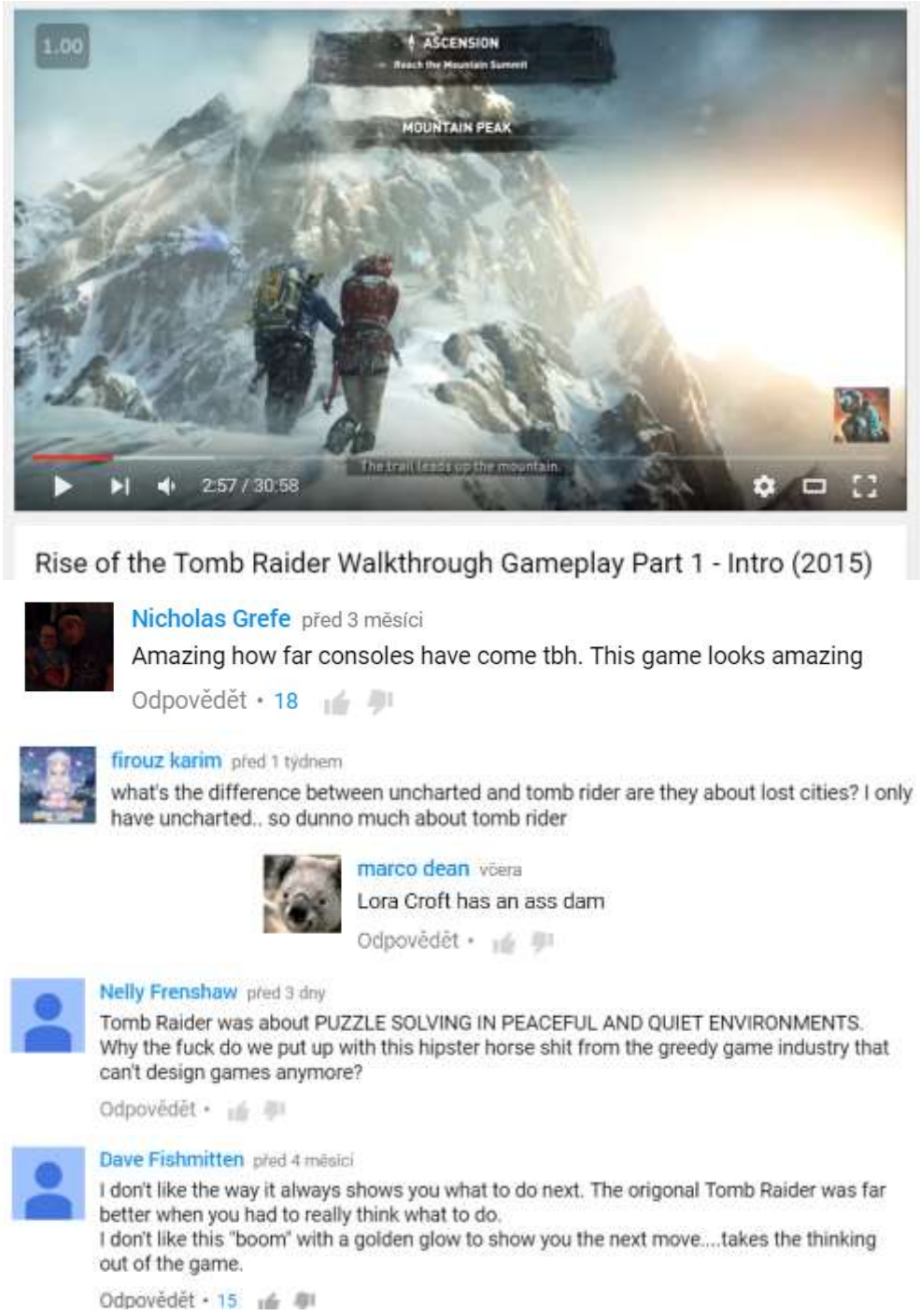


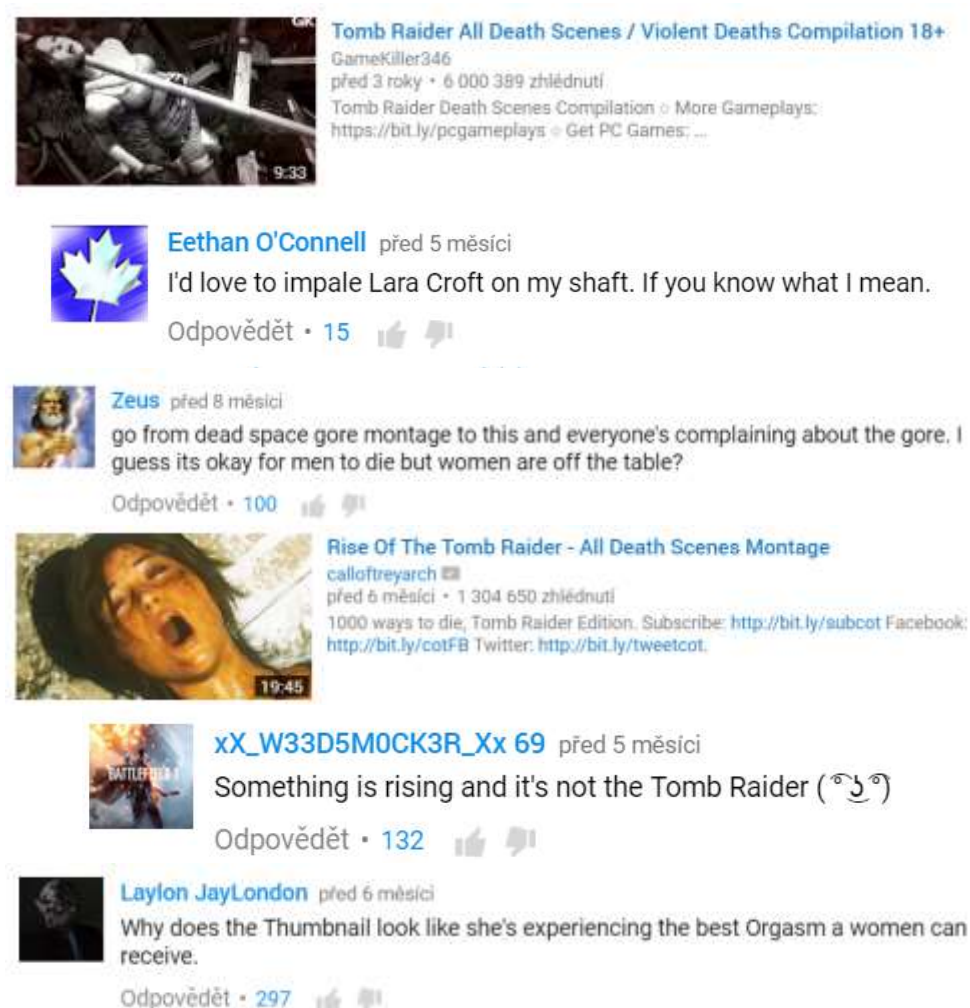
Figure 10-5: YouTube video comments

Among top search results, videos addressing violent deaths in the reboot series are present multiple times and spawn many views. Complaints about the gore level can be found among comments. (YouTube 2, 2016)



Figure 10-6: YouTube users reacting to reboot's violence

As suggested by thumbnails, **sex and violence** go well together and attract views, which immediately shows in the comment section. Interestingly, discussion about **gender equality** is still a thing, as one of the comments suggests. Playing as a female character seem to bring different kind of gaming experience, even if sexual attraction is excluded. **Sexual innuendos** and direct **comments about sex and pornography** were made in the comment section for videos showcasing death scenes in the reboot series, as shown in Figure 10-7. (YouTube 2, 2016)







**Punch11ne101** před 6 měsíci

I thought the video was a sex scene ...

Odpovědět • 195

Figure 10-7: YouTube comments section of many TR videos is flooded with sexual innuendos & direct comments on Lara's sex appeal and gender

TR's gaming legacy is underlined with videos showing the series' **evolution** and past, fluently alongside the cutting edge reboot, which attracts newcomers and loyal fans alike. Gamers share their **nostalgic memories** with other YouTubers and, again, make **comparisons between the reboot and the original series**. Lack of **puzzles**, low **difficulty**, Lara's talkative persona, and **action sequences** are criticized, as seen in Figure 10-8. (YouTube 2, 2016)



**Tomb Raider | Evolution | 1996 - 2013**

TombRaider

před 4 roky • 1 020 931 zhlédnutí

Voici l'évolution des jeux Tomb Raider de 1996 jusqu'à maintenant (5 Mars) 2013 :)

Bon visionnage !



**TOMB RAIDER - Evolution**

INDIEACHIEVEMENT

před 8 měsíci • 70 437 zhlédnutí

The videos of EVOLUTION, I try to bring a list of all games of a franchise. {ENGLISH}

Os vídeos de EVOLUTION, eu procuro trazer ...



**trkimura** před 9 měsíci

So many memories - thanks for upload!

Odpovědět •



**kjwgaming** před 8 měsíci

anyone else use to lock the butler in the freezer thing?

Odpovědět • 13



**200PoVstrechnoy** před 8 měsíci

Great video :)

It is sad to see a puzzle playformer with a side of combat turn into a combat game with a side of puzzle playforming :( I miss the elegance and atmosphere of the original game. It

[Další informace](#)

Odpovědět • 9



**Cookie Crystal** před 4 týdny

I hate the new lara Croft game. she talks in third person to her EVERY TIME! I'm sick of it. her voice is annoying too.

Odpovědět • 2

Figure 10-8: YouTube comments also touched the themes of nostalgia, brand heritage and consistency

As for **blogs**, Stella's Tomb Raider blog was focused mainly on **walkthroughs**, **hints & tips**, and **gatekeeping** concerning the purchase of games and release dates of new, TR-related content (**comics**, games, merchandise, DLC etc.). (Stellalune, 2016) It even featured an interesting post showing **fan engagement** with the series that could possibly transform into a real Guinness World **record** award (as shown in Figure 10-9). Stella also proudly **linked with the official TR website** through a graphical element (badge) and is among fan webs presented on Tomb Raider's official website (Figure 10-10).



## Help Tomb Raider Unlock a Guinness World Record

Calling all collectors! As you may have heard, the Tomb Raider developers have been amassing a huge collection of Lara Croft magazine covers as part of the 20th anniversary celebration. The count now stands at around 1,050 unique covers—enough to secure a **Guinness World Record for Lara Croft as the Video Game Character with the Most Magazine Front Covers**.

But like all true raiders, they're not content with 99% completion. They want EVERY Tomb Raider cover printed. So they're encouraging all of us to look through our personal collections to unearth any covers that have not yet been included. If you find one, please scan it or take a high-quality photo and either put it up on [Flickr](#) and [send me a link](#), or send the scan directly to me ([stellalune@tombraiders.net](mailto:stellalune@tombraiders.net)) and I will make sure it is included.

Figure 10-9: Stella, a blogger, tried to help the franchise gain another Guinness World Record by activating other fans  
*Source: (Stellalune, 2016)*



Figure 10-10: Stella's blog was part of TR's brand network orbit

Pfangirl's blogspot about **film**, **comics**, Tomb Raider and **pop culture**, featured an interesting article, labelling **Lara Croft as a gay icon**. (Pfangirl, 2015) The article is well written, logically sequenced, both credible and personal, excerpt can be seen in Figure 10-11.



### Lara Croft: Tomb Raider and Queer Icon (Part 1)

There actually aren't that many fictional heroes with full spectrum appeal – a fan following that spans all genders and sexual orientations. **Tomb Raider's Lara Croft**, arguably the most iconic of female video game characters, is one of these rare cases (despite what the **laddish marketing of the franchise** in the late 90s would have you believe).

Once we may have stated "Women want to be her, and men want to be with her", but such an explanation is outdated, simplistic and far too heteronormative. It does nothing to explain the diversity of Lara Croft's fan base, and why it is that so many queer men and women around the globe hold her in high esteem.

Andrew, in Scotland, certainly does:

*I wouldn't say she impacted on my sexuality, but she did help me out in the sense of making me feel brave enough to be comfortable with who I am.*

Crystal, in South Africa, makes a similar point:

*Through marvelling at her strength and story I have come to marvel at my own, and this has helped me to love myself more and grow.*

Figure 10-11: Pfangirl and other TR fans describe Lara Croft as a character to aspire to, as a role model and motivation  
Source: (Pfangirl, 2015)

It places Lara's **boycott** of her **aristocratic roots** (as part of her official biography) **parallel to the process of coming out**, as a **brave stand against social norms**. As article states, Lara "remains **committed** to who she is and how she wants to live in order to feel **alive** and happy... she achieves **success** entirely on her own." This pushes forward the elements of **freedom**, **achievement**, and **solitary atmosphere**. It places Lara as an **Icon**, and, through her **self-esteem**, as an **inspiration**. Differences between old and **new Lara** are mentioned again as well as the **emotional binding** to the more **complex**, story-heavy persona she is in the reboot. Arguments against the **comic book invulnerability**, as mentioned in author's own self-reflection, are made. However, Pfangirl seems to love comic books herself, as seen in Figure 10-12.

As Jason, in the UK, says:

*I feel like I can relate to Reboot Lara more because she is younger, but also because we see her struggle. She's not perfect in the reboot, which is inspiring to me, as it shows that even the bravest of Tomb Raiders don't start off by raiding the Pyramids. :)*

*I love the rebooted version of Lara as she is in her genesis; young, inexperienced, lacking in confidence, frightened, vulnerable, in short, she is someone we can all identify with. She is not the untouchable Teflon Amazon of previous TR generations but instead feels very real: she can be hurt, both physically and emotionally. She experiences profound loss. And yet, she still carries on regardless, something which I do intensely admire. Her incredible resilience in the game is breathtaking to witness...*

Same movie, different measures of success - Reviewing Batman Vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice and Captain America: Civil War



Figure 10-12: Interviews supporting the „reboot Lara“, indicating that she has a relationship potential and a snapshot indicating that TR can be associated with comic books and superheroes

Source: (Pfangirl, 2015)

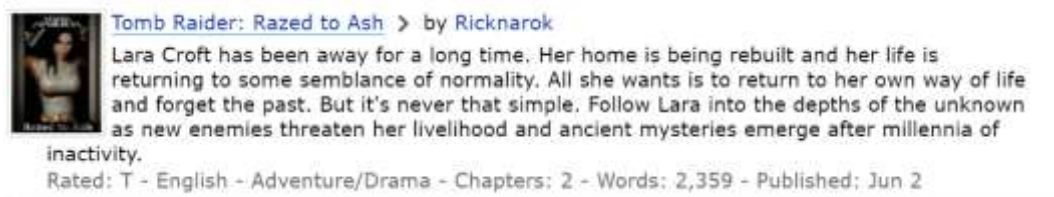
Pfangirl also mentions (and gives links to) **collaborative activities** of other TR fans, and engages in writing of her own fan **fiction stories**. In the article, as shown in figure xy, the problems of fans co-creating fan fiction are addressed. She complains about the **lack of interest on the side of Square Enix when it comes to stories**, although mentioning their focus on fan videos and cosplay, as seen in Figure 10-13.



Figure 10-13: Pfangirl engaged in writing fan fiction and complained about lack of interest from developers

Source: (Pfangirl, 2015)

Inspired by Pfangirl’s article, author Googled “**Tomb Raider fanfiction**” to be left with these results on **fanfiction.net**, as seen in Figure 10-14. (Fanfiction, 2016)





**The Handmaiden's Tale** > by Nuova Luna *reviews*  
 Set after the events of Yamatai, Lara is thrown into a world where it seems everyone knows her name. Trying to escape the past Lara finds that not all she believes in is true and that her life is not always what she chooses, but what is thrust upon her.  
 Rated: T - English - Drama - Chapters: 10 - Words: 17,410 - Reviews: 28 - Favs: 22 - Follows: 45 - Updated: May 29 - Published: Apr 1, 2013 - Lara Croft

**Who Sold The World?** > by Josh14Raider *reviews*  
 The sequel and conclusion to Fall Of The Tomb Raider, Lara must embark on a new adventure and discover the truth behind a secret organisation that seeks a new change for all living beings through their new discovery.  
 Rated: T - English - Adventure/Mystery - Chapters: 7 - Words: 7,187 - Reviews: 14 - Favs: 1 - Follows: 1 - Updated: May 29 - Published: Dec 22, 2015 - Lara Croft, Kurtis

**The Doppelgänger** > by HeidiW *reviews*  
 A follow-up to In The Time We Have, this story presupposes that the Epilogue in the previous fic never took place (for obvious reasons). Lara charges Elsie with an impossible task.  
 Rated: K - English - Hurt/Comfort/Friendship - Chapters: 18 - Words: 48,915 - Reviews: 4 - Favs: 5 - Follows: 6 - Updated: May 28 - Published: Feb 13

**Standing alone** > by FeistyPantsInAthens *reviews*  
 After the big events of TR Lara found herself in complete darkness. Literally. everything is a blur and she doesn't know where she is. Sam isn't in the darkness with her and she feels so alone. Now more than ever, what is going on? Let's find out. It's my take on what happens in between the 2 games. Inspired on the E3 2014 trailer  
 Rated: K+ - English - Mystery/Hurt/Comfort - Chapters: 5 - Words: 6,512 - Reviews: 1 - Favs: 3 - Follows: 5 - Updated: May 18 - Published: Jun 18, 2015 - Lara Croft, Samantha N.

**When old lives die** > by LouiseWolff *reviews*  
 Sam's observations about life after Yamatai.  
 Rated: T - English - Hurt/Comfort/Friendship - Chapters: 22 - Words: 4,913 - Reviews: 40 - Favs: 43 - Follows: 59 - Updated: May 17 - Published: May 30, 2013 - Lara Croft, Samantha N.

**Tomb Raider: The future of adventures** > by Sanglyph *reviews*  
 R&R...This is the story of a young adventurer who first started doubting her abilities but soon she will be ending up saving the world from darkness and evil..  
 Rated: T - English - Adventure/Mystery - Chapters: 4 - Words: 3,602 - Reviews: 2 - Favs: 2 - Follows: 6 - Updated: May 15 - Published: Oct 18, 2013 - Lara Croft, Samantha N., OC

**The Croft Oath** > by TR Kurtis Trent  
 Lara has had enough of all her friends dying around and she still thinks its her fault, so she makes a choice to leave the Manor for good and will be working on her own but someone from her past is back but he needs her help, will she be able to help him or is he going to de as well.  
 Rated: T - English - Adventure/Hurt/Comfort - Chapters: 3 - Words: 2,007 - Favs: 1 - Follows: 1 - Updated: May 10 - Published: May 1

**Tomb Raider: Beyond The Darkness** > by AnyaVeritas *reviews*  
 Set Three Months After Angel of Darkness. Kurtis after recovering from coma, thanks to the help of a Mysterious Healer, Turns back in Paris to his sister Miranda. But he needs again Lara's Help to find the Temple of the Nephilims and Avoid a Possible apocalypse. [LCxKT, After AoD, OOC Warning]  
 Rated: T - English - Adventure/Drama - Chapters: 2 - Words: 4,887 - Reviews: 1 - Favs: 3 - Follows: 3 - Updated: May 8 - Published: Dec 29, 2015 - Lara Croft, Kurtis, J. Karel, OC

Figure 10-14: Perexes to various TR fan fiction

Source: (Fanfiction, 2016)

The keywords repeat as **archaeology**, **discovery**, **mystery**, **strength** and **independence** are mentioned again. Lara is “thrust” into a “difficult situation”, has to undergo an “impossible task”; “uncover the truth” and save the world to “avoid a possible apocalypse”.

The **solitary atmosphere**, as mentioned on Steam and YouTube, took a different shape when it came to stories. Lara is depicted as a person who has been **marginalised** from society, who is **alone**, searches the “depths of the unknown” while finding herself in “complete darkness”, feeling “so alone”, being **threatened** by “enemies” and trying to “forget the **past**”. On top of that, stories like this were categorized and labelled with **drama**, **hurt** and **comfort** tags.

**Heroism, independency, and loneliness** were situated next to the evergreen theme of **love**. The user-created content varied from classic, romantic **love stories**, across **gay (lesbian) drama**, to plain, teenage boys' "**wet dream**" **stories**, covering all bases possible. Examples for each category are shown in Figure 10-15. As set by standards of Netnography, the posts are not censored.

Games > Tomb Raider

In heaven  
By: lavinder

Lara and Kurtis meet again, there is an accident and lightning strikes.  
Rated: Fiction T - English - Romance - Chapters: 2 - Words: 9,227 - Reviews: 2 - Favs: 7 - Updated: Oct 8, 2005 - Published: Oct 5, 2005 - Id: 2606447

Finally making it to the manor she had to wake Kurtis, he stood up perfectly normally and Laras cold hands reached over to his now dry top and lifted it and run her hand across a scar forming where he'd been stabbed.

"I told you it was only a scratch" he joked but his eyes still looked pained. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a big brass key and began to walk towards his home. He opened the door and began to walk up to his bedroom.

 **The Car Accident** by PurpleSheep  
Lara and Sam find themselves in a difficult situation after driving through the snow.  
Rated: T - English - Drama/Hurt/Comfort - Chapters: 1 - Words: 1,701 - Favs: 1 - Follows: 1 - Published: Jun 1

Closing her eyes again Sam nodded her understanding. She reached up for the English girls hand on her face and held onto it loosely, tucking it under her chin. "We'll be okay" she muttered somewhat sleepily. The severity of the situation seemingly not reaching her.

**Adult-FanFiction.org**  
Bringing Readers & Writers Together Since 2002

This was not the thing that shocked Lara most, however. The most disturbing detail about the scene laid out before her was this: Zip's black combat pants were unzipped at the waist, his flies pulled down, and his big black cock was jutting up from his groin, fully erect, towering above his six-pack abs like a foot-long ebony pillar.

Figure 10-15: TR themed fan fiction also touched the topic of sex, from mild innuendos to full blown pornography  
Source: (Fanfiction, 2016; Adult-FanFiction, 2015)

The last medium inspected was **Deviantart.com**. (Deviantart, 2016) A social media website that allows sharing of artistic content, whether it would be fan art, cosplay pictures, photography and fan fiction. The platform also serves as an e-shop for creators.







**Figure 10-16:** Lara Croft is pictured as a strong, determined, resilient, and sexy female worth cosplaying as  
*Source: (Deviantart, 2016)*

As demonstrated by creations in Figure 10-16, series' iconography was easily translated into fan art. **Caves, ruins, flooded corridors, torches, flames, guns, explosions** are all part of the TR gameplay experience. Mrs Croft, depicted as **strong, brave, determined, acrobatic, and sexy** did not strive away from the official concept either. **Injuries, dirt and blood** were common and seem to amplify the strength of her persona with **fire** fitting to the idea of **determination** and **willpower**. The custom-created, plush medipack only underlined "**injury**" as part of the series' symbolism. **Cosplay** had significant share on the created fan art. The willingness of women to dress and pose exactly like Lara gave hint to her **iconic status**, both as a **gaming character** and as **sex symbol**, hence some of the **provocative** poses. **No variation of Lara's looks was overlooked**, as attires were taken from every single title in the series. Whether it be the green tank top and shorts (TR1), orange winter vest (TR2), commando shorts and white bra (TR3), black night gown (TRL) or long pants, grey shirt and an amulet (TR reboot).

## Appendix 4: Lara Croft, as imagined by her developers

The following **analysis** was aimed at definition of **personality traits** and **behavioural patterns of Lara Croft**, the main character of the iconic Tomb Raider series. Official **box art**, **artwork** and **in-game cut scenes & FMVs** (full-motion-videos) were explored to see how Lara is portrayed **during each release**.

**Total of 8 hours of footage, spread across 9 independent titles**, was explored. Due to the complexity and subjectivity of the work, author was forced to **re-visit the content** at least **three times** for each release, which made it **about 24 hours spent with Ms Croft**.

### Introduction to Tomb Raider and Lara Croft

In his own words, author described the franchise like this: *“Tomb Riader is an action adventure puzzle platformer, in which the main heroine explores tombs across the world to seize a precious artefact. That requires her to face intricate puzzles but villains as well. Lara Croft represents both brains and brawn, she is perceived as a sex symbol and is often capable of impressive feats, on par with comic book heroes. The game’s lore includes fantasy aspects but is also connected to the real world cultures and mythology. Locations are based on reality but offer enough space for creative reimagining that’s both educational and spectacular. Treasures and relics are scattered through levels, waiting to be found, often hidden behind logical puzzles that test your wits. The areas are spacy, giving you the opportunity to explore and feel the solitary ambiance. Immersion with the environment is deepened by sound effects and fluent animations that make you feel engaged in every movement Lara makes. The realism has been refined in newer sequels and includes some contents that could be perceived as explicit. But as for the series overall, the violence is very manageable and revolves mainly around ranged pistol combat. Storyline involves supernatural elements, villains who want to destroy the world and the immortal struggle for treasure, fame and inner satisfaction. Music plays an important role, it motivates the player to progress and notifies in case of an in-game event. The games are about action and exploration, accompanied by a story with a classic villain archetype and presented from a perspective of the main heroine who has to save the day.”*

Author would like to quote the official 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary video for Tomb Raider to further explain its impact (YouTube 3, 2016): *“Since her debut in 1996, Lara Croft reigns as the undisputed queen of gaming. She has discovered entrances of lost cities; scaled insurmountable peaks; unravelled mysteries of the past and captured the hearts of fans the world over. Her incredible impact on gaming, pop culture and entertainment could not have been predicted, and twenty years later, Lara Croft remains a true icon of the industry. Tomb Raider is one of the most successful and longest-running video game franchises including novels, comics, magazines and has spawned countless toys and merchandise. Lara Croft has appeared in music videos... Lara Croft also holds more guiness world records than any other character, including the most successful videogame heroine. The franchise has won hundreds of awards and continues to have a profound effect on gaming industry and its players.”*



## Limitations

Tomb Raider has been a very successful franchise and many titles also appeared on handhelds, mobile phones or emerged in a form of expansion packs. The central storyline remained untouched within these releases and author considers them not to be crucial for explaining Lara's persona, hence their omission in the analysis. **Tomb Raider Chronicles** and **Tomb Raider (2013)** were also **skipped**, because the former was a mandatory release, forced by the game's publisher, and the latter closely resembled the newest entry in reboot series, which had already provided three hours' worth of detailed footage.

## Usage

Author used content of this analysis to create a **RM focused questionnaire** concerning **personality attributes** and **behavioural patterns of Lara Croft**. The goal was to set **brand's core values** and to **inspect** the internal **consistency** over its many releases. Results were then used to **compare each Lara iteration** to TRF community's **Ideal Lara Croft**.

## Tomb Raider (1996)

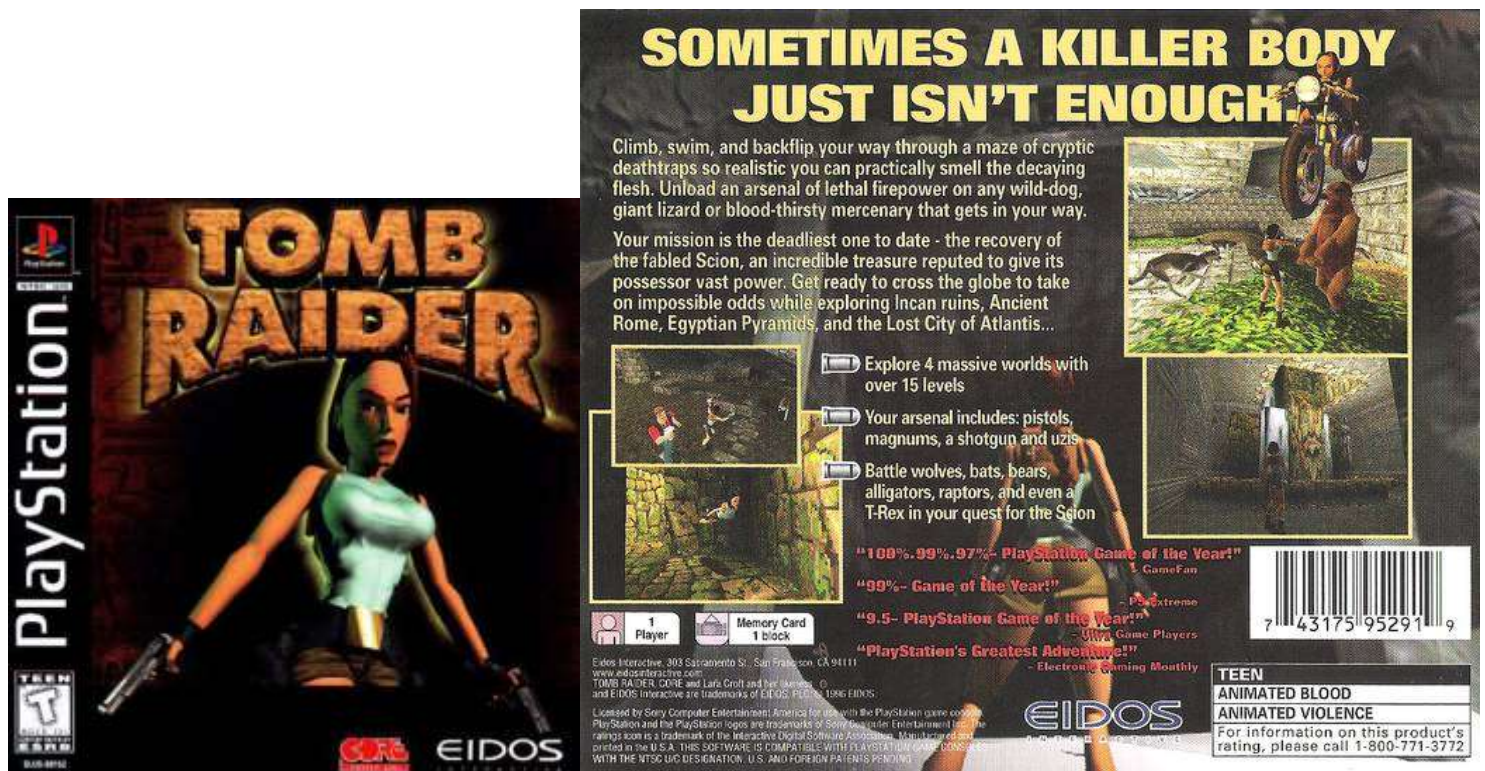


Figure 10-17: Front and back box shot for TR I

Source: (GameFAQs, 2016)

Lara's facial expression on the front cover of the PlayStation version release of TR can be described as **serious**. Her pose is **steadfast, strong** looking which is further underlined by her being equipped with dual pistols. As far as looks go, Lara looks similar to many **comic book characters**, featuring less detailed textures in favour of easily distinguishable shapes and colours. Proportions of her body are also **less realistic**, pushing the **supernatural**

factor even further. Lara also resembles Indiana Jones with the **retro attire** (simple backpack, beige short, red, round glasses and dual guns) and **globetrotting/ adventurous** persona.

Lara’s **athletic** skills are the first subject to be tackled on the back cover. “Unload an arsenal of lethal firepower.. on any(thing)... that gets in your way” may suggest that Lara is **merciless** and acts **rough**. Facing “...wild-dog, giant lizard or blood-thirsty mercenary...” surely requires **courage**. “---the recovery of the fabled Scion, an incredible treasure reputed to give its possessor vast power,” implies that Lara is either **eager for knowledge, striving for fame and recognition**, or, simply, **power hungry**. Lastly, the headline suggests that Lara has more than a “killer body”, although the final impression from the sentence makes readers think that Lara has an **athletic figure**, if not relating directly to being **physically attractive**.

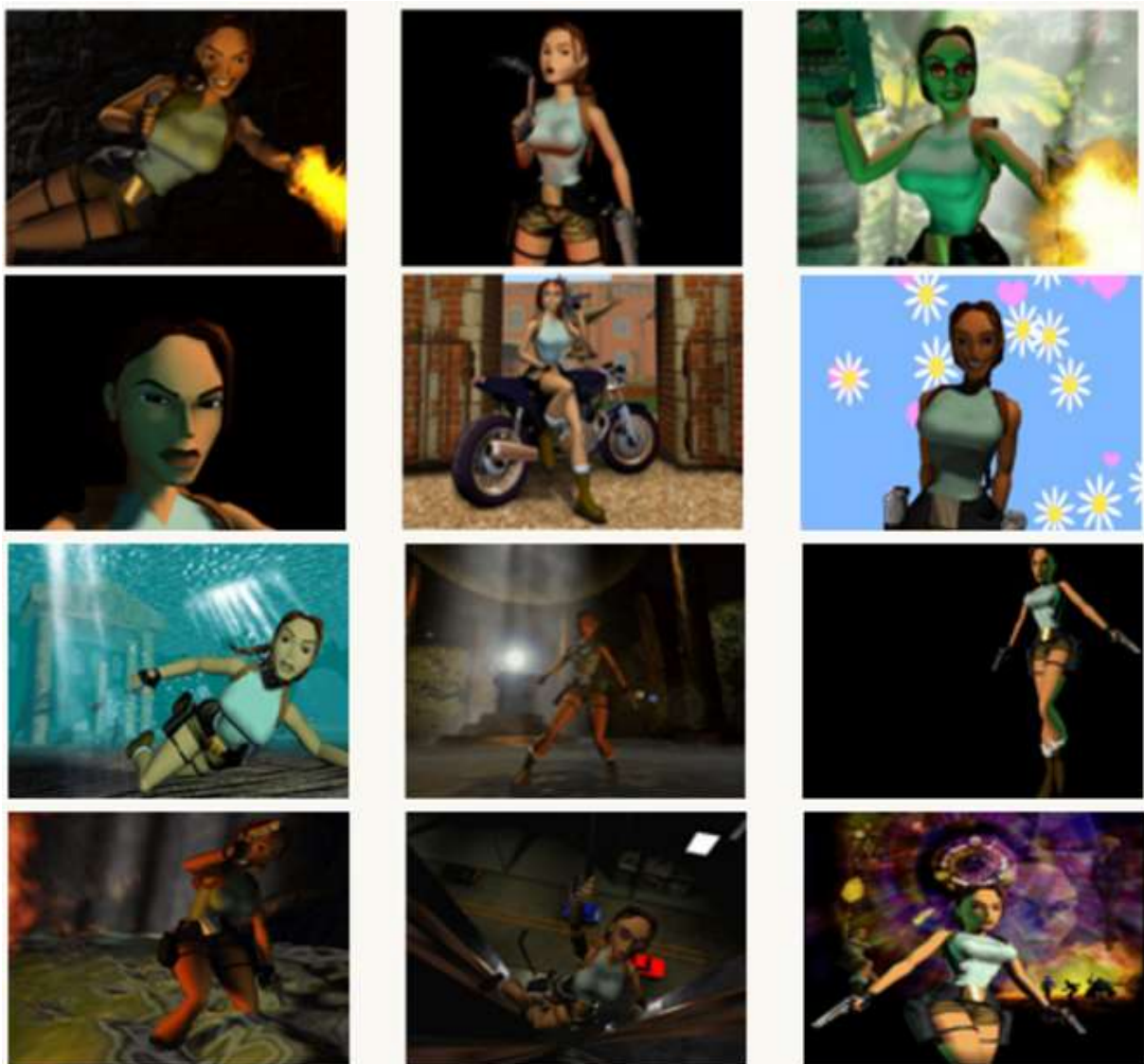


Figure 10-18: Promotional artwork for TR I  
Source: (Tombr Raiderchronicles, 2016)

Wallpapers, i.e. official pictures that served to promote the product and that were often used by fans as a desktop backgrounds, were designed in a similar way. Lara seems very serious and **deadly** on many, but also boosts **self-confident smile** and poses.





Opening FMV sequence from the game places Lara in “Imperial Hotel” in Calcutta, from which can be deduced that Lara has no shortage of money and is probably very **rich**. However, in a following dialogue, Lara states that “she only plays for sports” and is not interested in money. Natla, one of the game’s main villains, has to offer her. (YouTube, 2011) Author would like to describe that as **sportive** behaviour, Lara raids tomb for fun and probably wants to overcome herself along the way. Still, there is a notion that Lara **knows how to do business**. Supernatural and heroic traits are repeated with “Lara Stamps out Bigfoot” being printed on a headline of a fictional magazine.



Lara also seem to be portrayed as a **mysterious** individual, but a **well-known** mercenary that is **skilled** and can get the job done.



Lara’s courage and athletic skills are demonstrated again, as she climbs up an ancient gateway. Mercilessness is brought to life with Lara descending from a cliff, in a superhero fashion, and quickly disposing a pack of rabid wolves. Lara makes an **angry** grin and growls as she does so. She checks if her guide survived the attack, but shows **no regret** over the loss of his life.



First cut scene starts with Lara speaking with palpable **irony** in the tone of her voice. Self-confidence is shown again, as well as **swiftness** of her reactions as she counterattacks her enemy.



Lara makes a **spectacular** entrée in the next FMV. Instead of walking up a regular stairs, she ascends to the top of a building by cutting cables of an elevator.



Lara proves to be **educated** and capable of deciphering ancient languages and murals. Her character also seems to be **teachable**, as she tries to comprehend historical texts, artefacts and mysteries that lie before her.



**Cold-headed** and always **polite**, although ironic, Lara faces her ambush. In the right time however, she gets angry and **determined** to escape the scene by jumping down the cliff, proving her courage once again.



Spectacular and explosive nature of Lara's actions is shown again, as she uses her bike to jump to the boat of her kidnappers. Contrary to that, she acts **sneaky** to board unnoticed.



Lara confront the main villain, again in a cold-headed and ironic manner. But at the right time, reacts to stop the evil from destroying the world. Taking her to thinking things through, evaluate the situation and come up with a solution. Lara is **patient** and **analytical**. The explosive, ending scene follows and Lara escapes the island.



## Tomb Raider II: Starring Lara Croft (1997)

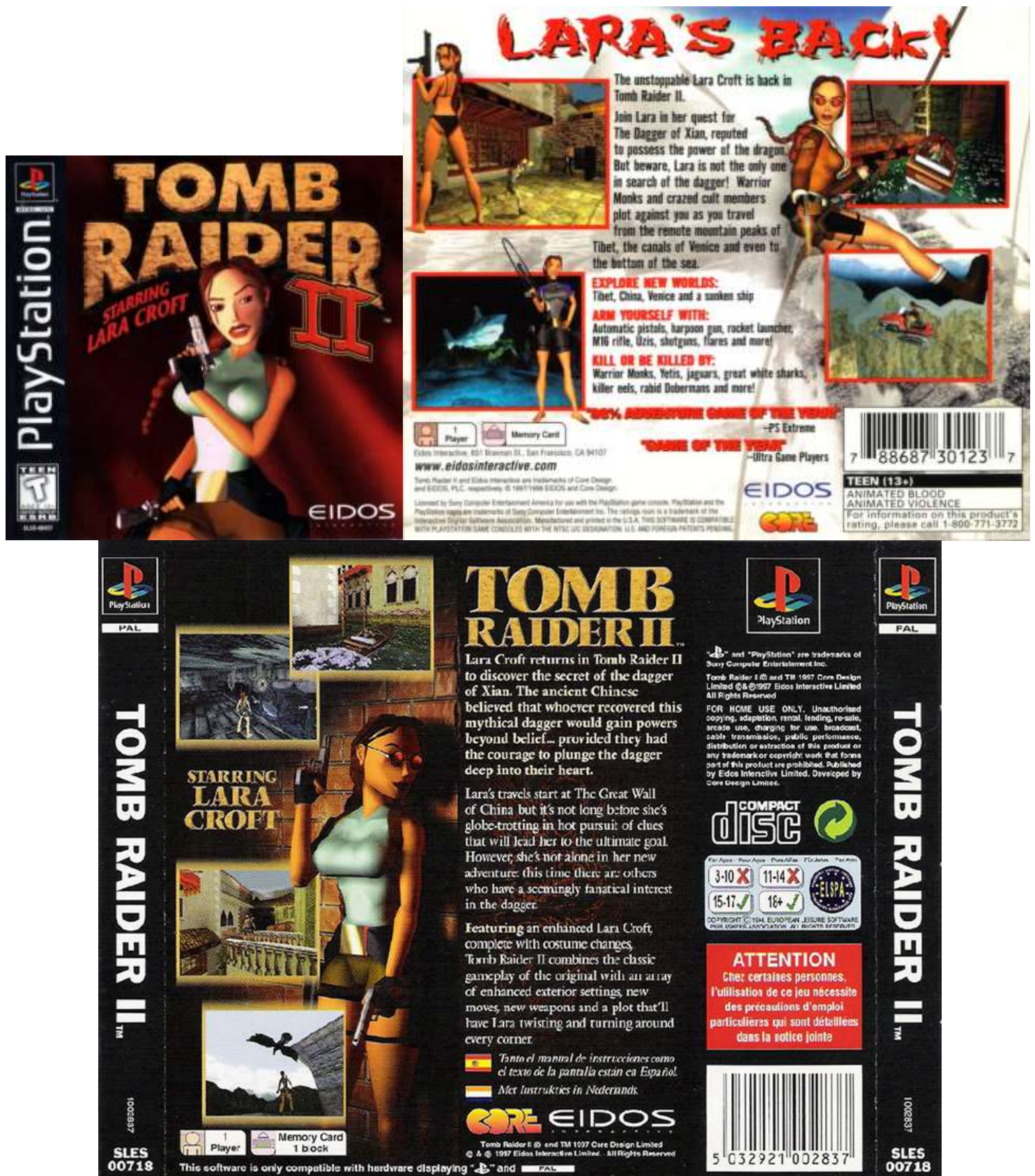


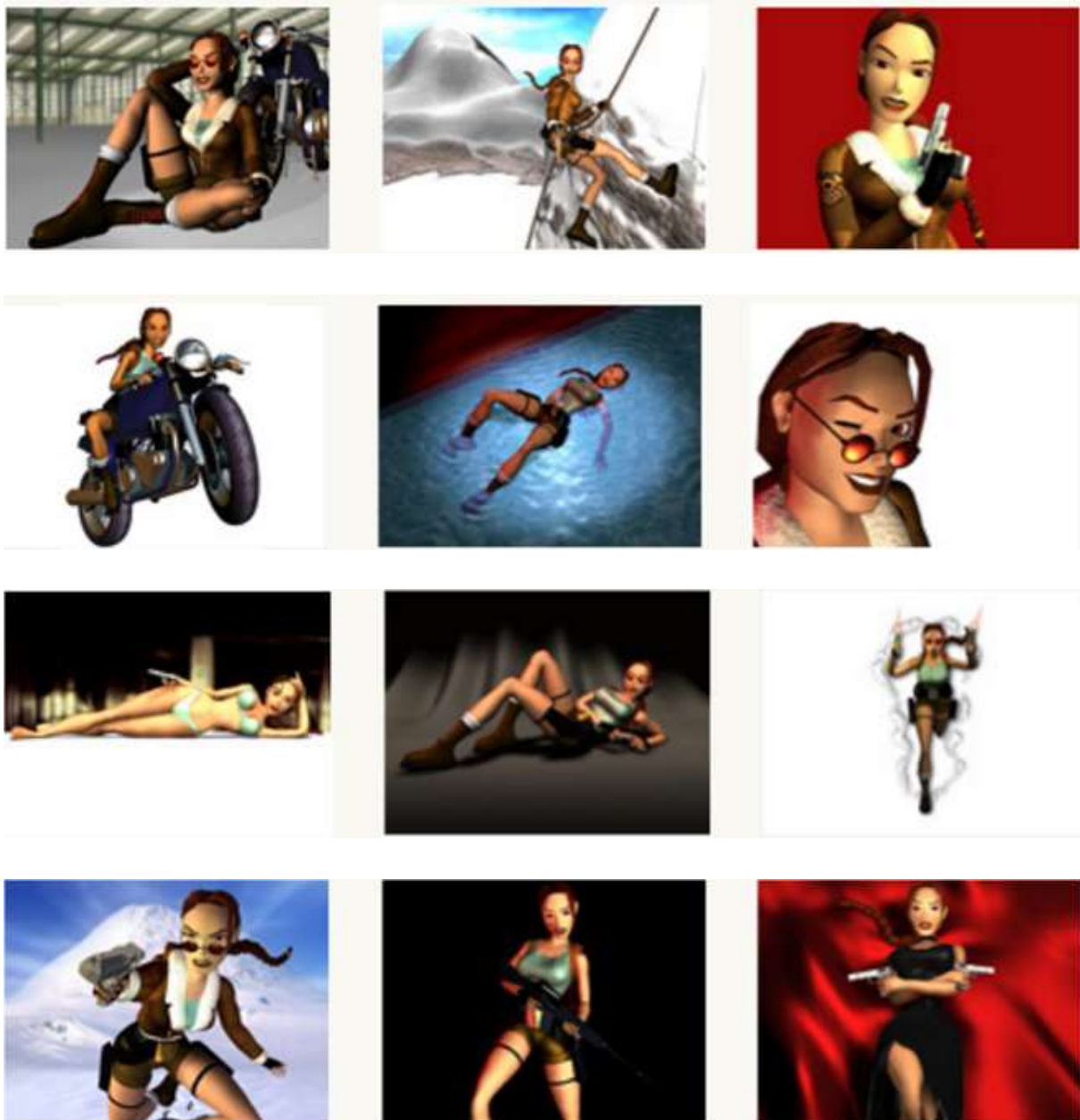
Figure 10-19: Box art of TR II

Source: (MobyGames, 2016; Emulegion, 2016; Stellalune 2, 2016)

Figure 10-19 depicts the cover art for the second instalment in the series. Unlike the first cover, Lara seems to be **sultry** and less threatening than before. Developer's, or publisher's, awareness of her **sexy** reputation is shown



not only by dressing her up in a bikini (as seen in the US version of the cover), but also by centring the visuals and copywriting exclusively on her persona, Lara Croft is a **celebrity**, a gaming **icon**, hence the “starring Lara Croft” sub title. This time, globetrotting, courage and her eagerness for knowledge are printed directly in the text.



**Figure 10-20: Promotional artwork for TR II**  
*Source: (Tombraiderchronicles, 2016)*

Wallpapers verify what covers suggest. Lara smiles, winks on a camera, lies on a red velvet background with a **seductive** expression on her face and even poses in a bikini. Pictures that show her guns blazing still exist, but they account for an equal amount of pictures that focus on Lara’s sex appeal. What’s interesting is the use of a **formal** dress, which underlines Lara’s aristocratic roots and her capability when it comes to manners.

As for actual in-game cut scenes and FMV’s, no new characteristics are revealed in a few minutes of footage. Lara enters the scene in a spectacular fashion, bravely faces danger, is swift and agile in her reactions and ironic when it comes to speech. (YouTube, 2012)





As in sequels to come, Lara proves to be skilled with technology as well, she is **tech-savvy**. Also, what was left unnoticed in the TR1 footage, Lara is not a serial killer and **doesn't kill, unless it is necessary** for self-defence.



Lara **doesn't show weakness** and keeps her cool, even after finding herself in a dire situation (getting her leg stuck underneath cargo). On the other hand, she doesn't lack **compassion** and is **not numb** when it comes to other people's suffering.



Also, her approach in the sequel is much more sneaky and **resourceful**, but the high-octane, explosive scenes still remain (Lara crashing down with a plane). Recalling past scenes, it can be said that Lara acts quite **destructive** and leaves a lot of damage behind.



For the first time, Lara lays **injured** and exhausted after escaping her death (killing the villain, taking the relic and destroying part of the big wall of China in the process). Lara keeps the Dagger of Xian as a memento of her journey, makes it part of her private **collection**, which can be think of as a visible symbol of **achievement**. The final, bonus scene, nearly shows Lara having a shower after a long day. “Nearly” because she shoots the camera with words “don’t you think you have seen enough?” before taking her clothes off. Interestingly, this is the only sexually oriented scene in the game and Lara acts in a manner that could be best described with words: “**look, but don’t touch**”, which is quite contradictory to the direct style of the promotional artwork.

### Tomb Raider III: Adventures of Lara Croft (1998)

**Bigger, Badder and Better than Ever!**

Join Lara in her biggest adventure to date in the phenomenal Tomb Raider series. Play through five huge worlds, in any order, on the quest for an ancient meteor rumored to have life-giving powers. From the jungles of India to the icy wastes of Antarctica, Lara is ready for anything. Prepare to be amazed!

**Features:**

- New Locations:** Play in any order as you follow Lara through the South Pacific, Antarctica, Area 51, London and India.
- New Moves and Vehicles:** Speed dash, monkey swing, kayak and quad bike help Lara out of tricky situations.
- New Weapons and Enemies:** Defend against hyenas, monkeys, piranhas and the infamous T-Rex with new weapons like the Grenade Launcher, Desert Eagle and Rocket Launcher!
- Hi-Res Graphics and Dual Shock:** Analog Control for the first time on the PlayStation.

**“Lara Croft is our kind of action hero!”** —Rolling Stone

**1 Player** **Memory Card 1 block** **Analog Control Compatible** **Vibration Function Compatible**

EIDOS Interactive, 651 Brannan St., 4th floor, San Francisco, CA 94107  
eidos.com

7 88687 30183 1

**TEEN**  
**ANIMATED VIOLENCE**  
Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating information.

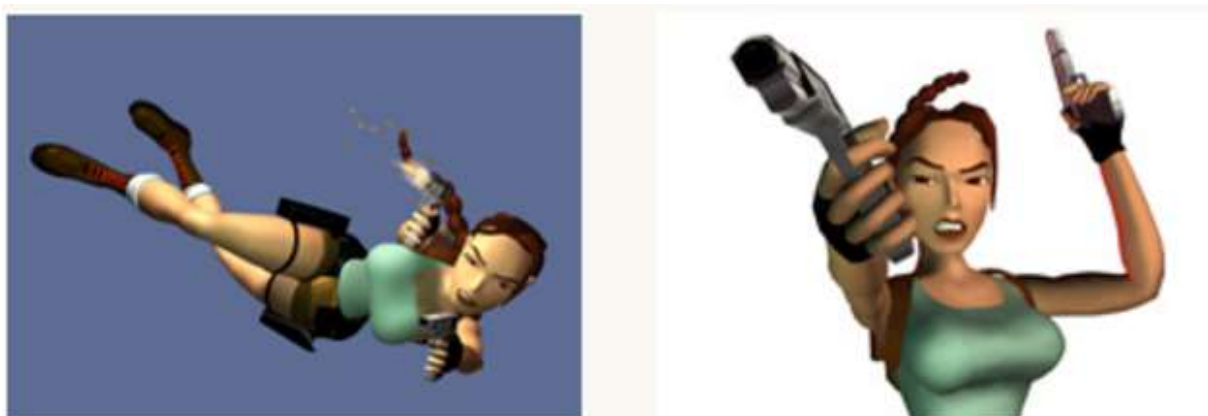


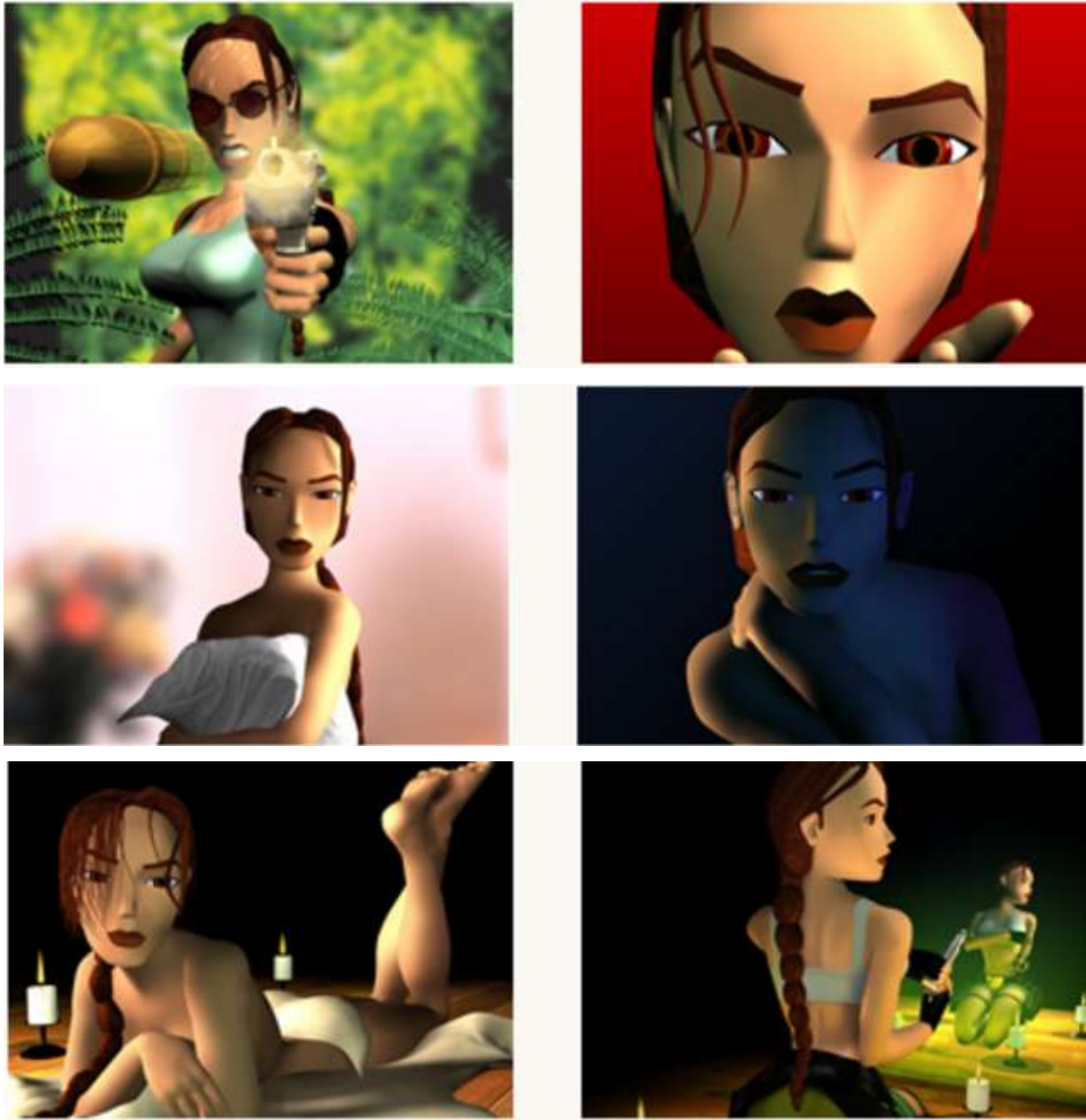


Figure 10-21: Tomb Raider III box art

Source: (GameFAQs, 2016; ThelsoZone, 2016; ThelsoZone 2, 2016)

The cover material for TR3 doesn't seem to include much new information about Lara, besides the notable breast surgery on the back cover. New characteristic would be **crafty**, as Lara has to "outwit her foes" using her new weaponry and moves. Characteristics that repeat include: **deadly**, **serious**, **athletic**, **sexy**, **globetrotting**, **courageous** and skilled with vehicles.





**Figure 10-22: Promotional artwork for TR III**  
*Source: (Tombraiderchronicles, 2016)*

Figure 10-22 also confirms the status quo, but, compared to TRII, majority of artwork is Lara in sexual poses, the subtlety has vanished. Promotional materials represent **softporn**: “Sexy media content that is not quite pornographic, “as defined by Urban dictionary (T.V.John, 2005). On the rest, Lara is **seductive, angry, smiling and fierce**.





When encountering a mildly insane adventurer, Lara does not slide to insults or threats and is very **inquiring** and wants to get as much information as possible. (YouTube 2, 2012) Classic scene with a collapsing temple and an escaping villain plays. Lara shoots at the villain, falls, injures herself, but still manages to dodge a falling rock pillar and chase him down in a quad bike, which makes her quite **resilient**.



For the first time, **Lara's family** is **mentioned briefly**, namely Lara's father who got his hand on the artefact shown in figure xy. At the end of the scene, Lara gets **enthusiastic** about the quest for artefact.



In the Nevada level, Lara gets injured again and is captured by enemies. In the South pacific level, the trait of **compassion** is now undeniable as Lara directly offers help to an injured soldier. Lara also seems to supply her relentless, ironic tone of voice with a **dry sense of humour**.





Another humorous scene is mixed with action. Lara is attacked but manages to defend herself and settles for an inquiry rather than for homicide. She **talks** very **rational** and uses **straightforward**, yet polite **way of expressing herself**. The enemy falls from the roof in the end, as Lara uses her **quick wits** and patience to let him be knocked down with a swinging bell. It has to be noted that her action is an answer to the enemy's second try to attack her. Black cat-suit makes its first appearance in Lara's wardrobe and is stylized for a stealth atmosphere and style of gameplay.



Next cut-scene begins with Lara falling for another light injury and interrogating a seeming enemy. When facing the main villain, Lara uses her dry humour to infuriate, she acts very **provocative**. In another level, the topic of evolution is tackled again (first in TR1) and Lara seems to behave **heroic** and **socially responsible**, having concerns about the safety of her archaeological quest and its possibly negative impact on humanity (forced mutation). Lara tries to stop the maniac, but gets knocked over and robbed of the accumulated artefacts.



Besides another injury scene, Lara manages to stop the villain and prevent humanity's demise.



What is out of her character however, is the last scene. Lara sneaks to a helicopter and answers smiling soldier with a gunshot. The act of unnecessary **murder** may be explained with other helicopters chasing Lara and trying to shoot her down with missiles as she makes her, successful, escape. Still, this is the only FMV from TRIII that author remembers, mainly because it felt somehow alienating to Lara's given personality.



## Tomb Raider IV: The last revelation (1999)



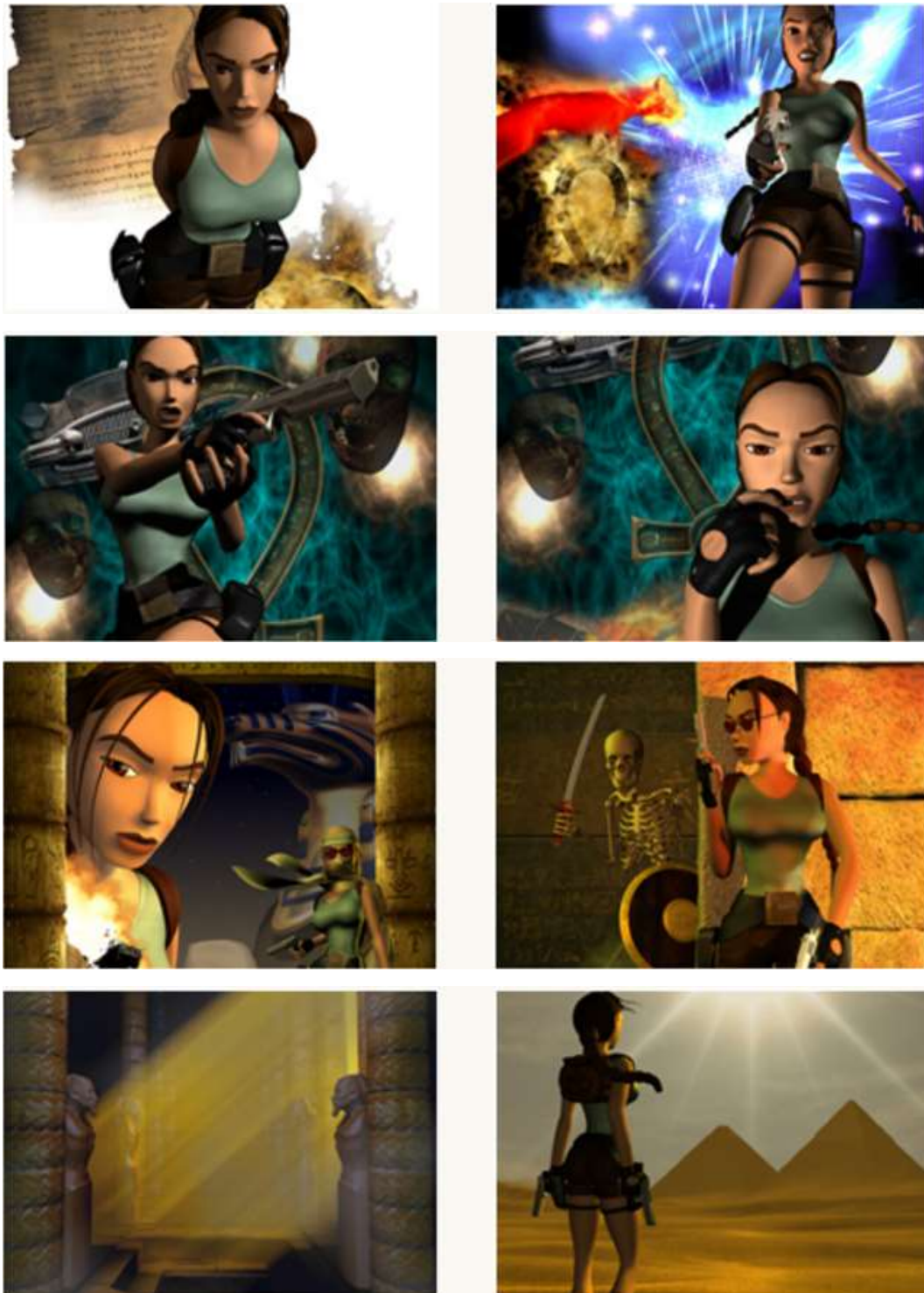
Figure 10-23: Box art of TR TLR

Source: (MobyGames 2, 2016; GameFAQs 3, 2016; Stellalune 3, 2016)

Besides the expanded breast size, nothing new I seen on the front cover. History, ancient civilizations, mystery, secrets, danger and revelation are used to form the right mood. On the back inlay however, Lara



“unwittingly unleashes its (lost tomb’s) ancient evil, fulfilling the prophecy that threatens to plunge mankind into eternal darkness... Lara must use all her will and skill to re-imprison Set and save the world form Armageddon!” which implies that: **Lara makes mistakes**; is a hero; is **socially responsible** for her actions; is skilled; has **wits**. “...to overcome the most ingenious puzzles and infernal traps ever devised...” requires Lara to be **intelligent** and **problem solving** skills. The American back cover includes the line “... Man, Lara is HOT,” which completes the usual set of key words.



**Figure 10-24: Promotional artwork for TR TLR**  
*Source: (Tombr Raiderchronicles, 2016)*

No new insights about Lara are provided by looking at the promotional material in Figure 10-24 (globetrotting, fierce, seductive, sneaky, mysterious). On the other hand, for the first time, the game is promoted with **one overarching theme** and that's Egypt. Images include pyramids, desert, pharaoh statues, ankhs and Lara dressed as a nomad.



The cut scene/ FMV footage is twice as long as of TR3; three times longer than of TR1. The first scene begins with young Lara exploring a tomb with her mentor, Verner von Croy. The origin of Lara's backpack is explained with young Lara finding it in, presumably, one of the first tombs she has ever explored. From the game's perspective this is important, as it is the first time we see the series to explain origins, **build lore**. As artworks suggest, the game takes place in Egypt, which is a contrast to the globetrotting nature of previous titles. However, it made the storytelling and stylization more consistent and the flow of the **story** was even **used for a future instalment**, Angel of Darkness. (YouTube 3, 2012)



Young Lara does not seem to lack self-confidence, but at the same time she **shows respect** and **wisdom**, by not wanting to intervene with an ancient curse, which can also be interpreted as **carefulness**. She even states: “we should lend it (the curse/ the ruins) some respect ...disrespect is a root of carelessness.” When the deadly mechanism is triggered, Lara offers her help to her, ignorant, mentor, but fails to rescue him.





In a following FMV, Lara's **clothes** appear to be more **functional** and less revealing. She triggers a trap, slides down a tunnel and falls unconscious for a minute.



Lara proves her language skills and interest in ancient myths and legends, as she reads the inscription on an artefact. **Historical figures**, such as Seth and Horus, are part of the story, which is based on a real, **religious** history of Egypt.



Another, **high-octane** scene is shown. Lara drives a jeep, gets aimed at with a rocket launcher, but instead of avoiding the enemies' missile, she gets angry, speeds up and shoots at the ambushers. Explosion follows, Lara lands safely on a boat.



“Jean Yvves, my faithful friend,” says Lara and gives a friendly hug to a man. If Winston, the family butler, is omitted, this is the first friend to Lara Croft. Besides business partners, Lara has not shown any **friendly ties** up until this scene.



Lara gets trapped in a tomb by her old mentor, after ironically **bantering** about their history (irony and dry humour are utilized again). Lara acts very analytical and is aware of the danger of getting trapped, she replies with gunfire, but fails to slide underneath a closing door.



Another scene explaining the **story** and the ancient curse is played, in a very **ominous** way. Lara interrogates again and settles for incapacitation, rather than for a kill.



Lara speaks with Jean, **shares her problems** and expresses her **tiredness** with quests to save the world. This being sad, Lara **asks for advice**, but shows **determination** and **persistence** by wanting to get the artefact and stop Von Croy. Courage is also demonstrated by Lara immediately replying “take me there” after being presented a problematic location where the artefact might be located.



Social consciousness, puzzle solving and agility are showcased in many cut scenes prior to Lara reading a threat from Von Croy. After discovering that her friend has been kidnapped, Lara immediately runs for his rescue. Lara is heroic, or maybe even **caring**. She also helps another injured soldier, following his instructions and acts quite **gullible**.



Lara saves her friend, prompting him to “get out of here,” which plays well for the caring trait. Also, Lara says that she is “very, very careful”. In a next scene, villain tries to convince Lara to join him. She is offered unfathomable “vigour” and “control over life or death of those she chooses”, but rejects. She is **incorruptible**. Another religion, Muslim, appears briefly, mentioning some of the basic elements, such as mosques and Allah.



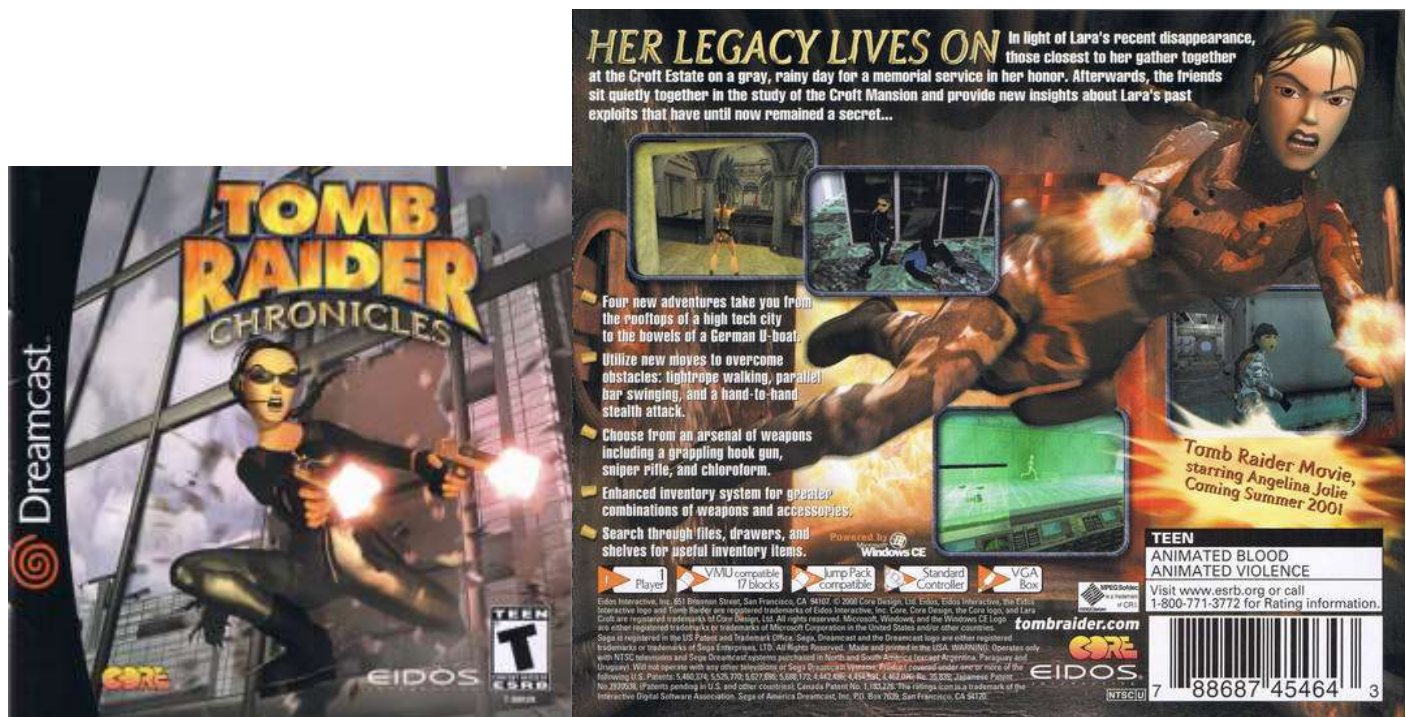


Lara breaks the curse, saving Von Croy, and tries to escape the temple. On her way out however, the temple collapses underneath her feet and she gets trapped, or, probably, killed.

### Tomb Raider V: Chronicles (2000)

The last revelation was supposed to be Lara's last journey and Core Design wanted to take a break from the franchise, after producing 4 games in 4 years. Tomb Raider V: Chronicles was done due to the high pressure from the side of developers and because of an existing demand on the side of fans. As for the TR and Lara knowledge, its contents are not important enough to be included in the analysis, as it mostly consists of flashback stories.

As is shown with the cover artwork (Figure 10-25), Lara is treated like an icon, as a legend that just passed away. Continuing the trend set by The last revelation, Lara has a **group of friends**, who mourn her death and remember past adventures. The title is promised to explain Lara's origins and expand the lore.



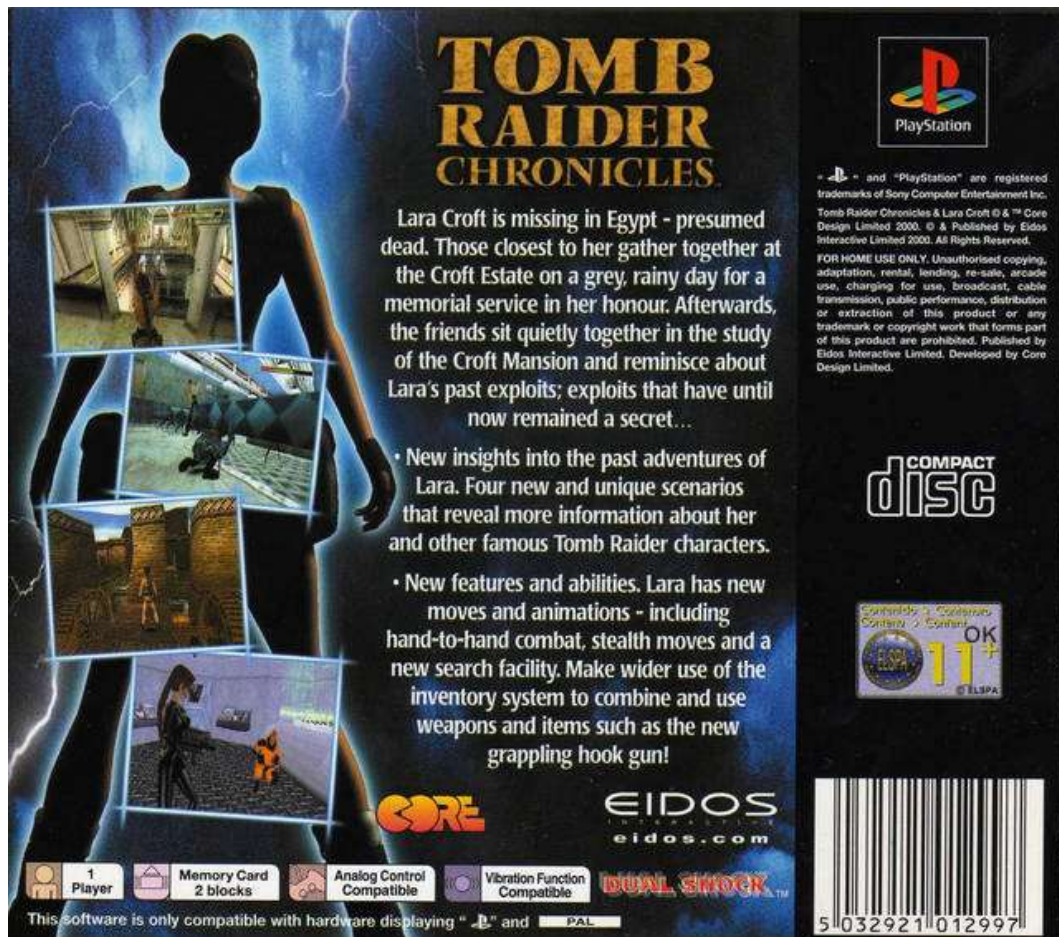
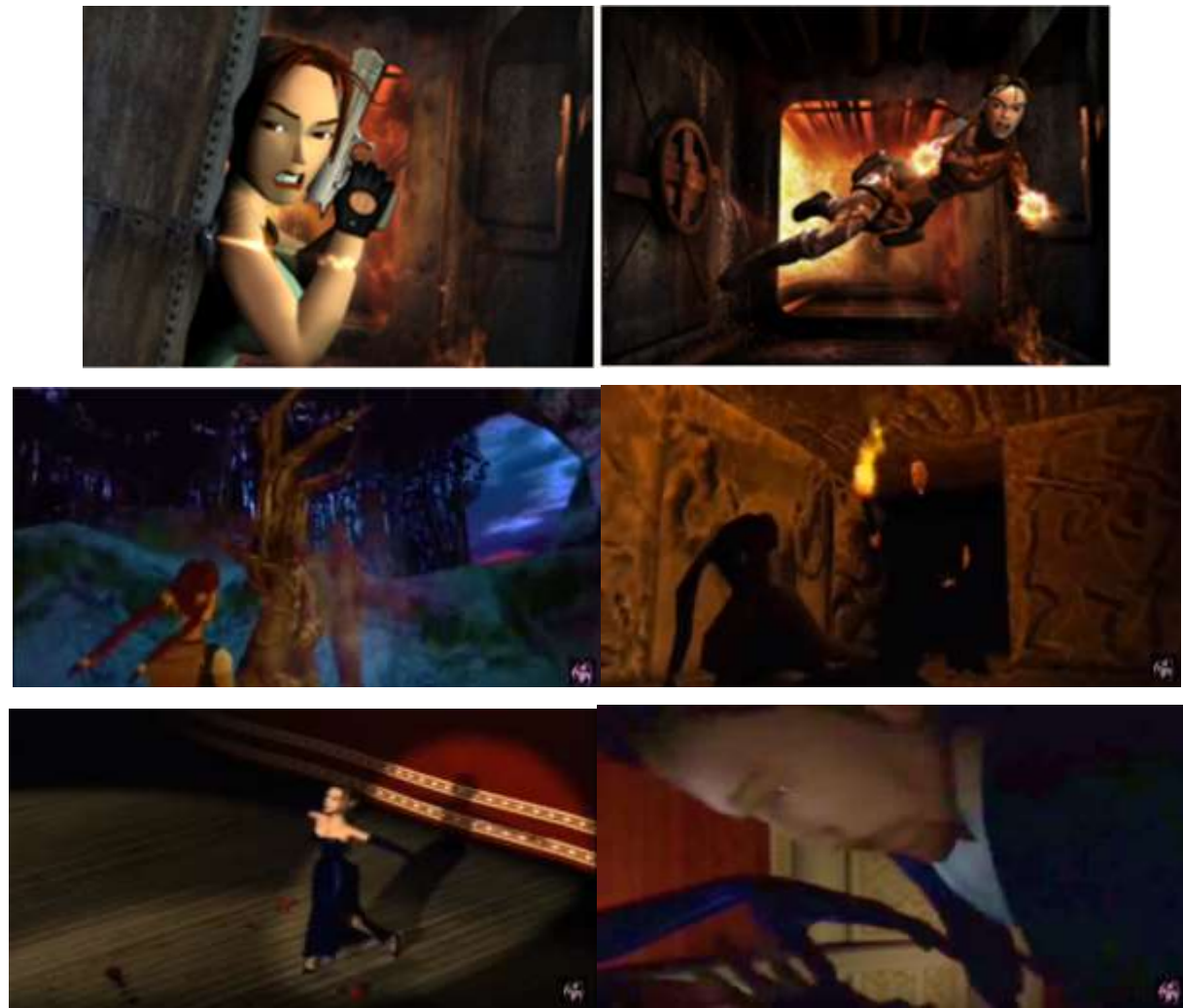


Figure 10-25: Cover art for TR Chronicles  
Source: (GameFAQs 4, 2016)

What is interesting about the game however, is the **high-tech, stealth based level** in which Lara wears black cat-suit (as seen in Figure 10-26), uses chloroform to incapacitate her opponents and sniper rifle to take them down silently. As a secret agent, Lara has an **“on the line” back-up** in a form of her later team member Zip. In other, **army level**, Lara is depicted as a soldier, facing extreme condition, commando crawling and gunning her way through. The last unusual theme could be labelled as **“eerie, medieval fantasy”**, where young Lara explores level with a haunting atmosphere and creepy villains. Lastly, Lara is pictured in a **formal setting** of a theatre, wearing a black dress and acting quite according to the **etiquette**, projecting her **feminine side**. Needless to say, her personality is preserved as she quickly gets rid of her enemies.







**Figure 10-26: TR V artwork & selected cut scenes**  
*Sources: (Tombraiderchronicles, 2016; YouTube, 2014)*

## Tomb Raider: The angel of darkness (2003)

A distinguishable line was drawn with the release of Angel of Darkness. The so called AoD Lara differentiates from the classic and is thus seen as a separate subject by many. Not only that, AoD presented a different set of gameplay mechanics, and higher level of production, no matter how buggy the final product was.

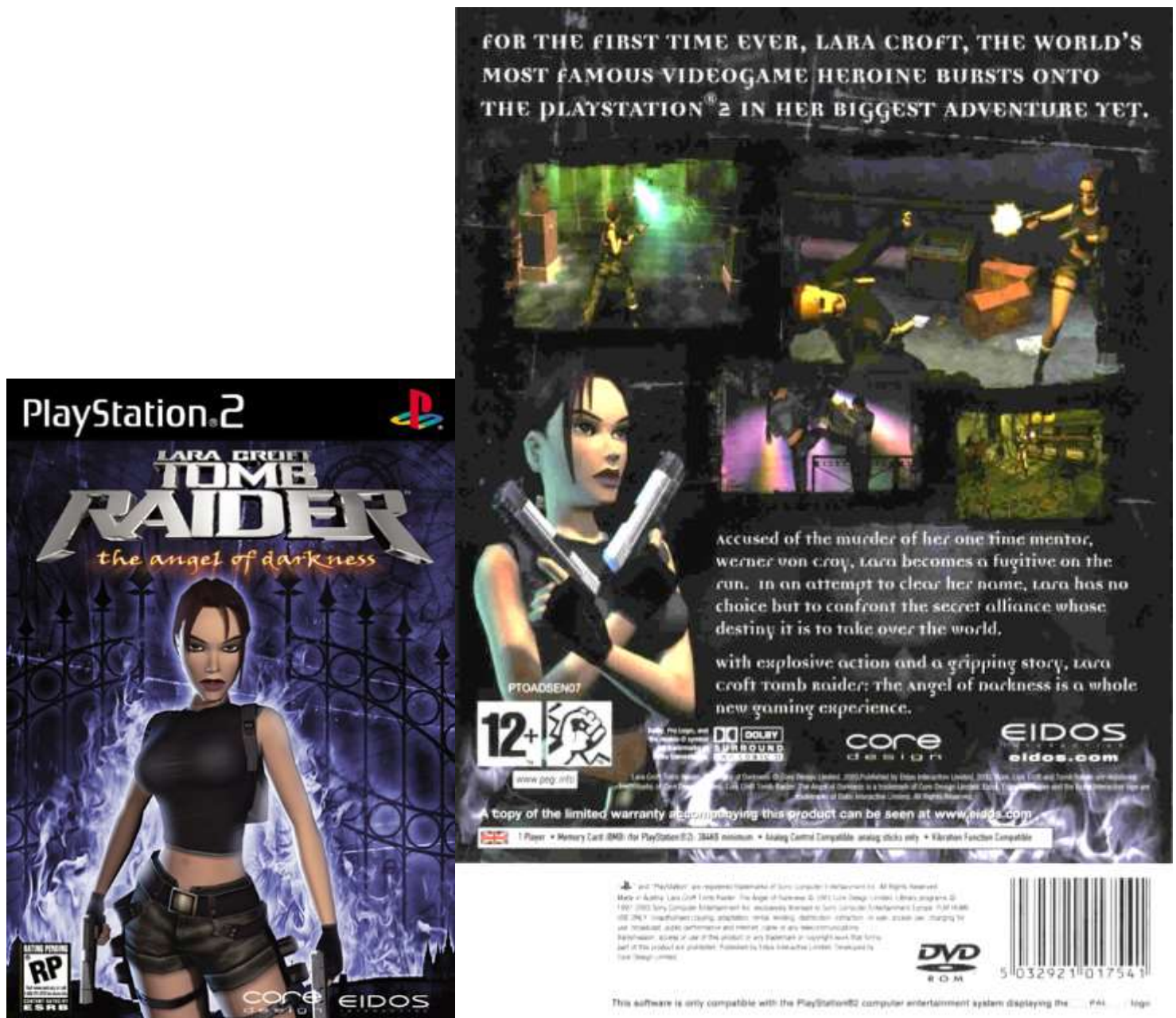


Figure 10-27: Boxart for TR AoD  
Source: (Stellalune 4, 2016; Emuparadise, 2016)

The core trait of the game is encapsulated in its title, darkness. Although dropping none of her sex appeal, Lara appears to be **dark, deep, mysterious** and even **wistful** to the point of looking **melancholic**. This is a departure from the straightforwardness and self-confidence she was given before. This is visually accompanied by dark blue and black colour palette. The back cover labels Lara as “fugitive on the run”, which, looking back at the web inspection, goes well with her **renegade, social reject** status. **Loneliness** would also be usable in this case. Lara



wants to “clear her name”, thus ease her mind of **past** events, namely her history with Verner Von Croy. **Lara has history**, AoD does not rely on a reset button when it comes to story, like the previous instalments did. It builds on foundations set by the previous titles, although not as much as the LAU era. The **story** is there and it is **important**, just like in The last revelation, it is **consistent** and **continuous**.

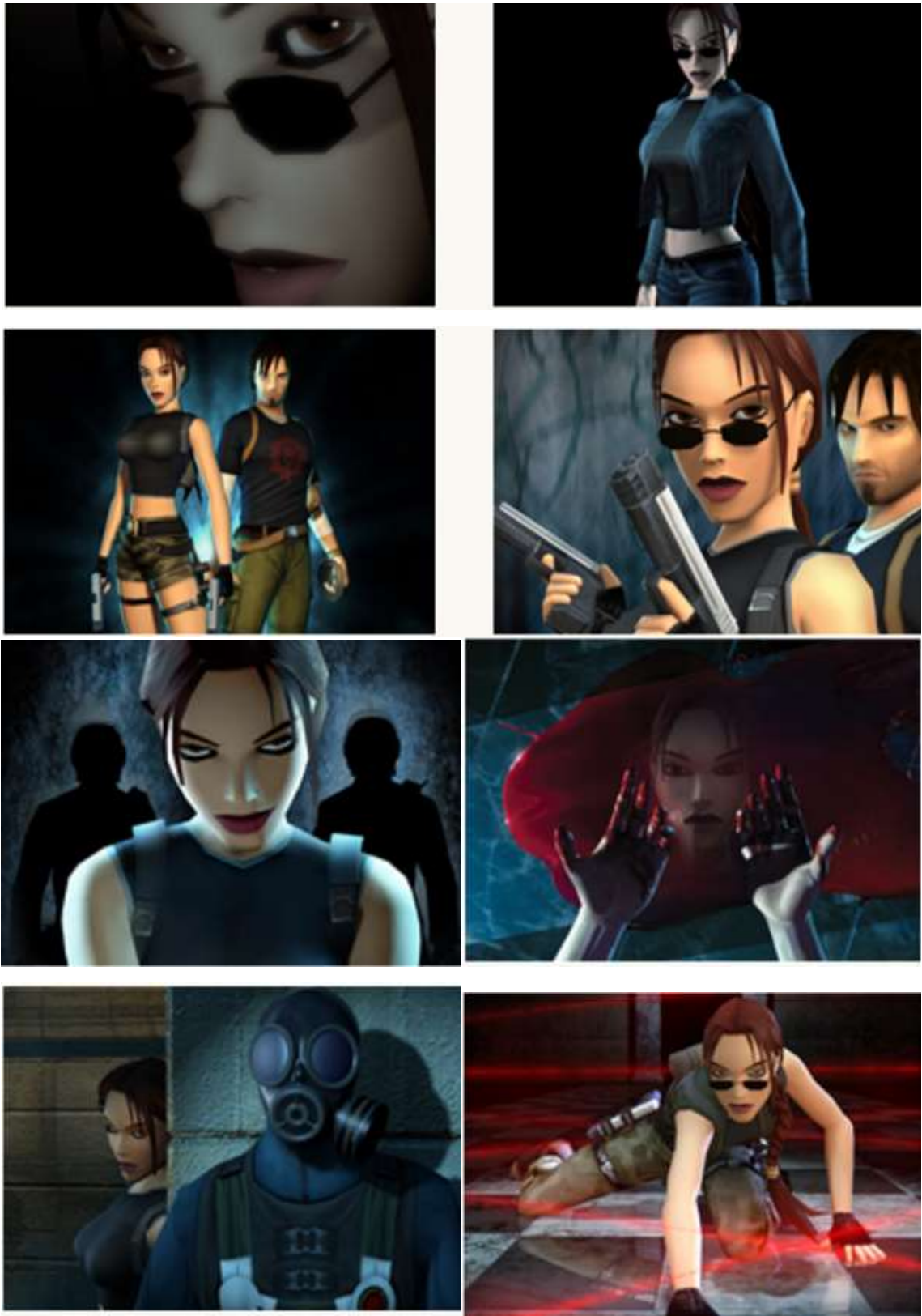


Figure 10-28: Promotional artwork for TR AoD  
Source: (Tombr Raiderchronicles, 2016)

Consistency is present throughout game's official artwork, as demonstrated by figure xy. The design feels **gothic** and **mysterious**. **Stealth** features are pushed forward and instead of displaying direct strength, Lara feels more like a **deadly assassin**, using her wits and agility to sneak past opponents. Lara also seems to have somewhat **maniacal** expression in her face, hands soaked in **blood**. For the first time, Lara has a **partner**, and a potential **love interest**, **by her side**. To fit the overall design of the game, Kurtis Trent does not stray away from Lara's own characteristics.



In the first scene, Lara sneaks back to the crime scene. Unlike in previous games, more ominous music and ambient sounds play in the background. Instead of Lara's confident and spectacular entrées, we see her acting quietly and thoughtfully. (YouTube, 2009)



Rewinding 2 days back, Lara is being asked for help by her mentor, Verner Von Croy. As said before, Lara **has memory** and recalls her past with Verner, thus being hesitant to help. For newcomers, there is lore to be studied before attempting to comprehend the story. "Why should I care," she replies with **stubbornness**. "Egypt Verner, you walked away and left me," is a straight violation of the canon, as Verner wanted to help Lara in The last revelation and is shown searching for her in Chronicles.



Lara **talks defensive** and does not reply in the classic, ironic manner, neither she makes any funny remarks. Overall, she is **less talkative**, more thoughtful and does not say a word when Von Croy gets shot. Emotions are expressed through music and animation. For the first time, **Lara's quest** is not **driven by** the wish for sports, fame, recognition or self satisfaction, but by her **relationship** with Verner.



**Instead of confrontig** her foes directly, **Lara runs away** from the police. She is a **renegade**, a falsely accused victim. She falls down from a window, but **recovers quickly**, showing just a slight bit of fatigue.



Lara still shows determination, as she wants to escape the police and athletic skills as she jumps across a chasm. This time, she is not quite succesfull and falls into a trash can, but recovers quickly. Screaming and falling seems to be a norm since TR3.





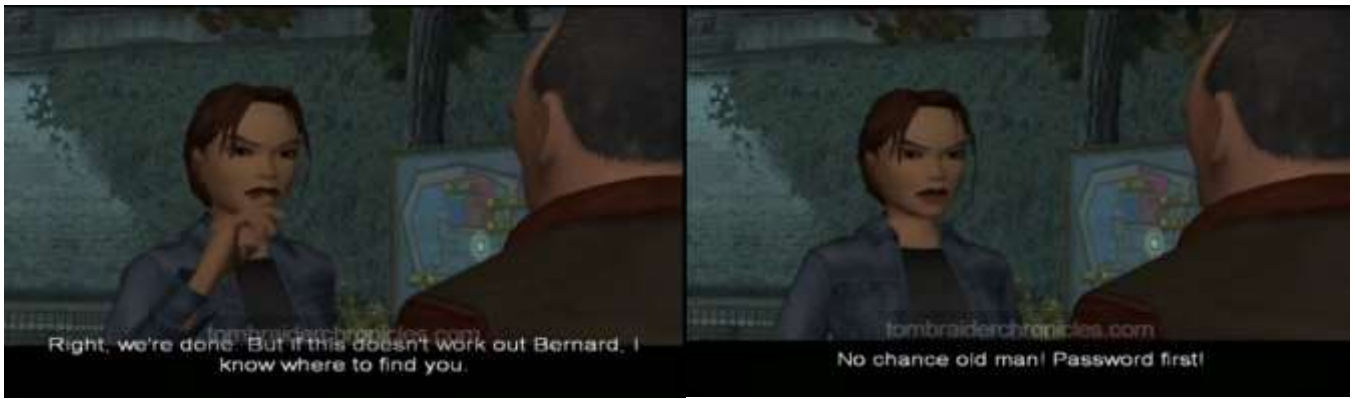
Lara's **supernaturally** swift reactions seem to be **toned down**, as she cannot remember what happened at Von Croy's apartment. For the first time, she appears **doubting** and unsure. She also gets **emotional** when accused of Verner's murder, which is a stark contrast to her cold-headed personality of past.



The stealth nature of the game is underlined by the necessity to indulge in conversations. Lara is **inquiring** and asks for clues, keeping her **patience** when gathering information.



Twice in one dialogue, Lara **threatens** one of the locals to get the information she needs. She uses **fear** to reach her goals. In the following interrogations however, Lara seems to settle for less information and does not seem to act aggressive, although putting some pressure on the interrogated subjects. **Ironic tone of voice** and **straightforwardness** are preserved, although being **more serious** and threatening.



Lara threatens again in the next scene, she also seems **less guillible**, in two scenes in a row. If one of the wrong dialogue options is chosen, Lara gets shot and dies. This implies that aggression is not the way Lara is meant to speak, the patient itnerrogation leaves the best results.



Ancient sect is positioned as main villains and Lara finally gets out of the urban area of Paris, straight to a tomb.



First love scene in the history of Tomb Raider appears as Lara meets Kurtis Trent in person. What looks like an ambush is clearly meant to be a **romantic moment** for both. The music, heartbeat sound effect, animation of Kurtis unnecessarily touching Lara while disarming her, or the final animation which depicts the **pair** nearly kissing serve as a proof. AoD Lara also doesn't say a word during the whole scene.



Lara chases Kurtis in a next cut scene, being silent again and missing her signature fierceness (antonym being **tame**). Kurtis, on the other hand, seems to be very self-confident and smug, toying with Lara as she unsuccessfully tries to catch him. Patience and persistence have to be taken into account, considering how long does the chase take.



Instead of keeping a cold-head and emitting confidence, Lara shows **passion** and **nervosity**, as she strives to reach Von Croys apartment quickly. Societal ties are built, as Lara is helped by Luis Bouchard, wants to explore the apartment alone, but, in the end, shows that she is **thankful** for the assistance.



Just like in TR3, TR4 and TR5, Lara **guillible** personality leaves her **betrayed**. Lara does not have any problems with **globetrotting** either, as she travels from Paris to Prague.





Upon arriving in Prague, Lara makes an **ironic** remark. Lara's inquiring personality and **sense for doing business** is demonstrated again, as she offers money in exchange for information. Lara's **analytical** skills are demonstrated in a next few scenes, where she manages to put pieces of the story together.



**Supernatural** elements and **mild violence**, including blood, are shown as Eckhardt, a villain, literally toast one of the side characters. The game also features a creature called "monstrum" as a **hidden menace**, placing its bets on **mystery** and **thriller** when it comes to atmosphere.



Just like in TR2 and TR5, Lara seems to have no problem with **technical skills** and manages to read in a floor plan as well as to shut down parts of a security system.



Lara is **imperious** in the next dialogue, seldomly **joking** and raising **doubts about existence of supernatural**. This is, however, proven to be false as a giant monster eats one of the “bad guys”.



Another oddly romantic scene plays, the **relationship** with Kurtis seems to be **unspoken** and the flirt based on **competing**.



Next few gameplay minutes are spent playing as Kurtis, who is gifted with **supernatural** powers (telekinesis being one of them). The mood gets darker as the level explored is a mental asylum. **Mild gore** is appears again in a form of a body with a surgically open chest.





**Personal motives** behind Lara's quest are mentioned directly, Kurtis being driven by them too. Lara suggests **teamwork** and proves to be a good **manager** of the group, **analysing** situation and **splitting tasks**. Team members **work separately** though.



Relationship is apparent when Lara **decides to give up one of her treasures to save** Kurtis. He returns the favour by giving Lara a boost and protecting her from yet another monster. Lara doesn't run away and wants to help him, she is **caring**. **Cooperation in team** is shown shortly as Lara and Kurtis stand side-by-side, splitting tasks again later and showing **trust** to each other.



Lara is labelled as **resilient** by one of the villains, makes a short, ironic remark and shoots. Lara is quite **unhesitating** when it comes to decision. "... it's going to be a real pleasure to shut you up," sounds **tough and self-confident**, **tone of Lara's voice** is a **little bit informal** and is **emotional (anger)**.



Just as in TR1, TR2 and TR3, Lara shows **no mercy when killing supernatural** beings. Theme of **betrayal** is used again, as one of the accomplices is shown to be the main villain. Just as in TR4, **Lara rejects the offer for power**.



Lara is shown doing impressive **acrobatic** feats, runs from the scene, and leaves a **path of destruction behind her**. In the last scene, she searches for Kurtis and finds a clue that he, most probably, survived the attack, and smiles as a sign of relief, Lara **cares about her team mates/ partners**. The background music sounds hopeful and positive and contains the main theme from TR1.

## Tomb Raider: Legend (2006)

After the commercial and technical fiasco of AoD, Tomb Raider franchise was handed over from developers Core Design to **Crystal Dynamics**. Tomb Raider Legend bet on the **legacy of Lara Croft**, her **iconic image** and presented the third gameplay and story variation in the series. To re-introduce Lara, Crystal Dynamics released the game on every platform imaginable and made the gameplay simpler to appeal to everyone. From author's own experience, his sister, mother and his best friend played Legend, even though author's mother doesn't engage in gaming at all, best friend is not interested in 3<sup>rd</sup> person gaming genres and neither is author's sister. The easy-to-understand gameplay and controls, the attractive graphics and music and the continuous, cinematic storytelling made the game widely accessible. The elimination of need for movement precision, automatic ledge grabbing, tunnel level design and permanent commentary were not favoured by many fans. More key points of critique come from Lara herself.

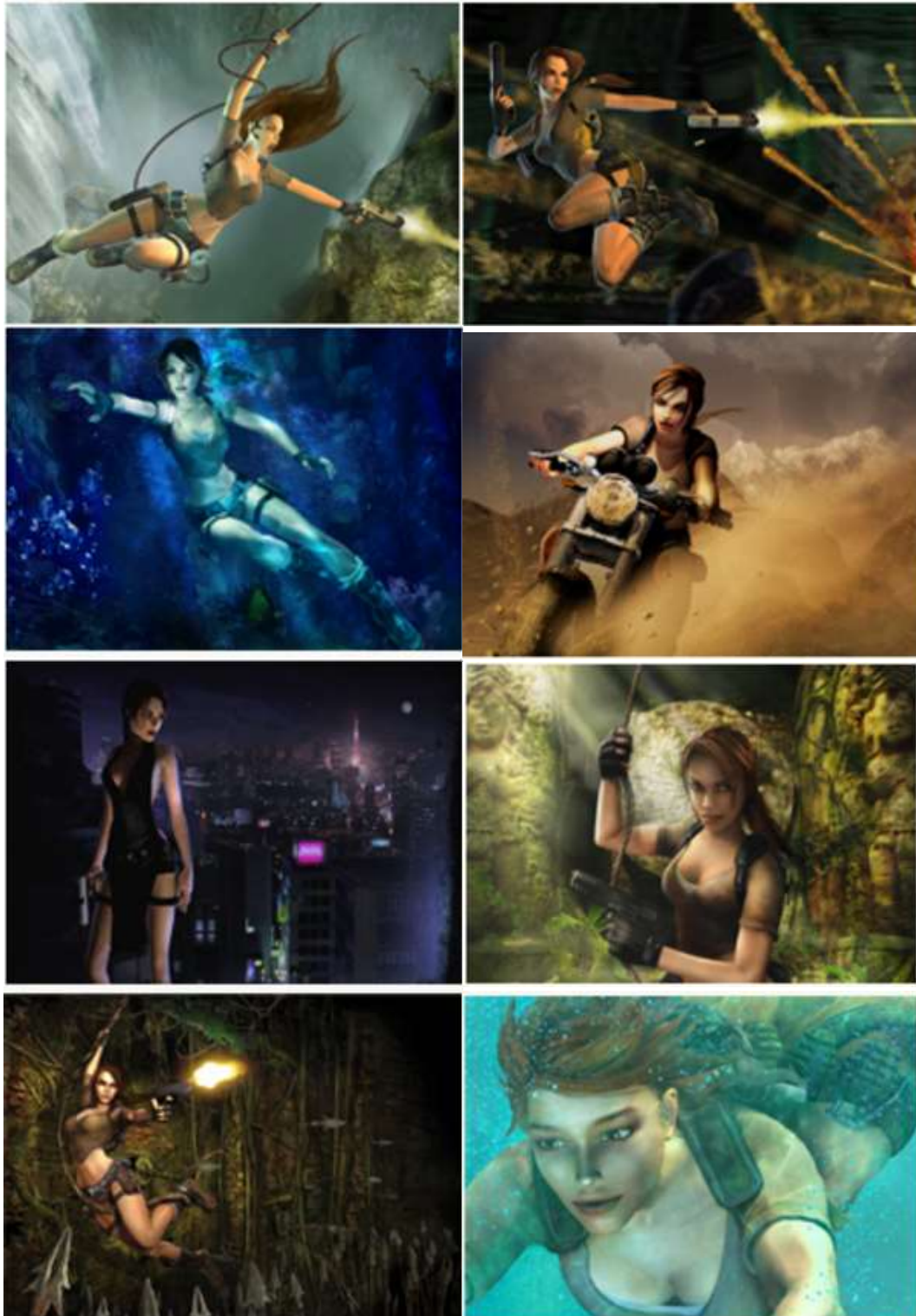
Lara resembles a **model**, both on the front and the back cover (as shown in Figure 10-29). Pretty hair, make-up, photogenic poses and a smile make Lara look more **feminine** than before. Cover also focuses on her face, no weapons, no explosions, no locations are shown, and it's all very **pretty**. Back cover reads: "In a race against time, Lara must travel across the globe to unearth history's greatest weapon. A legendary artefact of such immense power it could threaten humanity's very existence." Time limitation implies **pressure and thrill**, **globetrotting** is mentioned again, **revelation** and **history** as well. **Artefact** is placed as Lara's goal, **motives for power** and **for heroism** are two of the **implied motives behind Lara's actions**. **Tombs, acrobatics, gadgets (technology)**, and **explosive adventure** close the text. Included pictures show Lara escaping a **trap**, **swimming**, **exploring** and engaging in **pistol fight**. Jeep and Ducati, as used vehicles in the game, connect Lara with real-world, premium brands, very similar to James Bond (Lara even uses the Ducati bike dressed in a night gown).



Figure 10-29: Tomb Raider Legend box art  
Source: (Covers, 2008)



Lara is depicted as **deadly, fierce, self-confident, acrobatic, adventuring** and **sexy** In the official artwork, demonstrated with Figure 10-30. No directly sexualized artwork was produced as in the TR2 – TR 3 era. Besides the gunshots and explosions, **no violence** can be seen. Legend follows the scattershot design and although keeping a consistent artistic style, depicts Lara in **various locations**, namely the **hi-tech** Japan and **military** Kazakhstan (not shown in the artwork) stray off the **ancient** formula the most with England level sharing some of the eerie, **medieval** creepiness of one of the TR5 levels.



**Figure 10-30: Tomb Raider Legend promotional artwork**  
*Source: (Tombraiderchronicles, 2016)*

The FMV/ cut-scene footage of Legend is about 46 minutes long, this is shorter than the footage of AoD (61 minutes), but, if confronted with length of the main story, is twice as concentrated. Author created Figure 10-31 to compare FMV/ cut-scene footage with the length of the story of each TR game. Game lengths taken from HowLongToBeat (2016), adjusted with author's experience and badassgamez's walkthrough videos (YouTube 4, 2016).

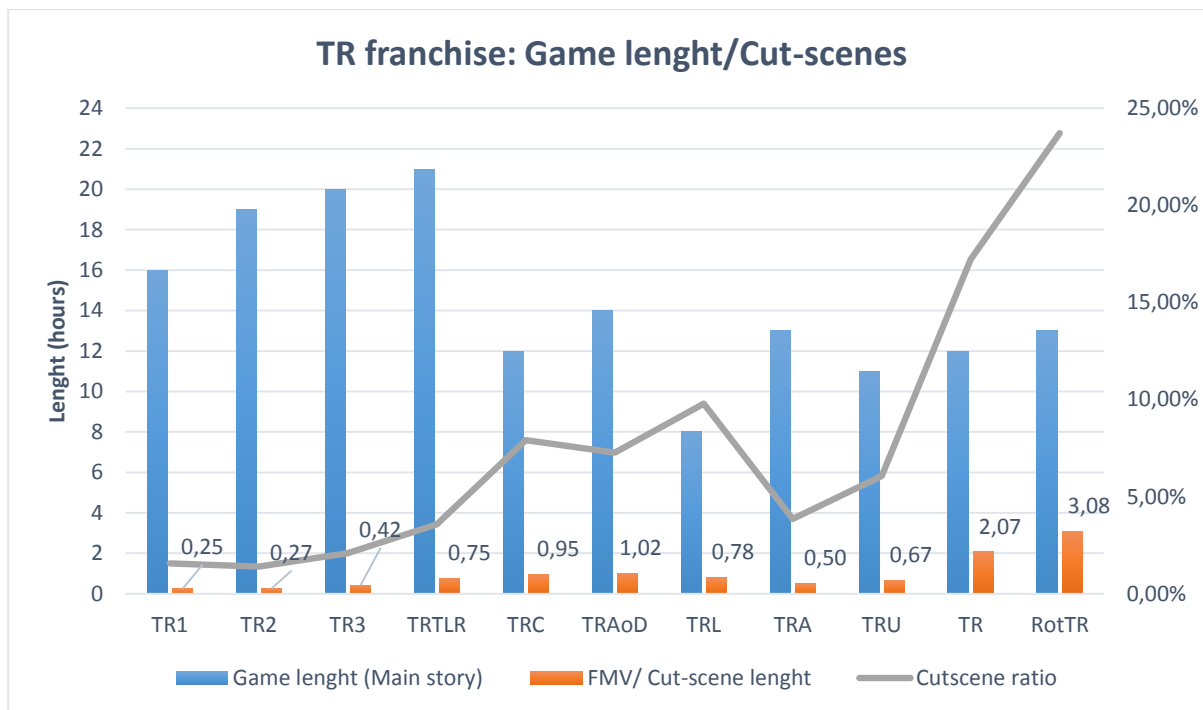


Figure 10-31: Evolution of gameplay and cut-scene length in TR franchise

As is shown with figure xy, the **game's story length has been reduced**, starting with AoD, but would **reach similar length during the reboot series (TR and RotTR) if finding all collectables (open world elements) is taken into account (20 hours for TR and 33 hours for RotTR)**. The **ratio of cut-scenes** (FMV/ Cut-scene length divided by Gane lenght) has been **rising**, providing more and more **space for storytelling**.



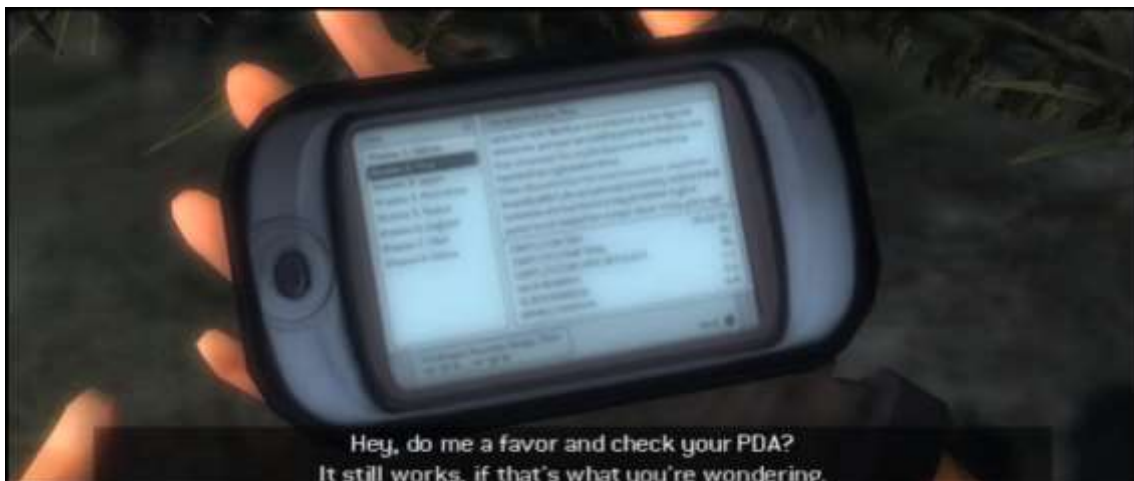
The game begins with a flashback cut scene with Lara travelling with her **mother**, to unexpectedly crash due to a severe storm. Interestingly, Lara's mother tells little Lara: "You never have to be cold, my Lara, if you don't want to be," which is in contrast to how Lara behaves in the first six games. The scene is **emotional** and creates **past for Lara**.





Really, Zip, it's like going up a set of stairs, only far less boring.

Coming back to present, Lara demonstrates her **acrobatic** skills, boosts **self-confidence** as she climbs a cliff, and is **backed up by her team**, Zip and Allister, who are in a **constant contact with her**. Lara and her team **comment everything** and the gameplay is **never silent**. Compared to AoD, Lara seems to be **more talkative** and drop **ironic remarks** more often. She also seems **less serious** about things, **less melancholic and thoughtful** compared to AoD. Lara still has **comic book hero/ supernatural qualities** and can climb a massive mountain without gear and jump impressive distances.



Hey, do me a favor and check your PDA?  
It still works, if that's what you're wondering.

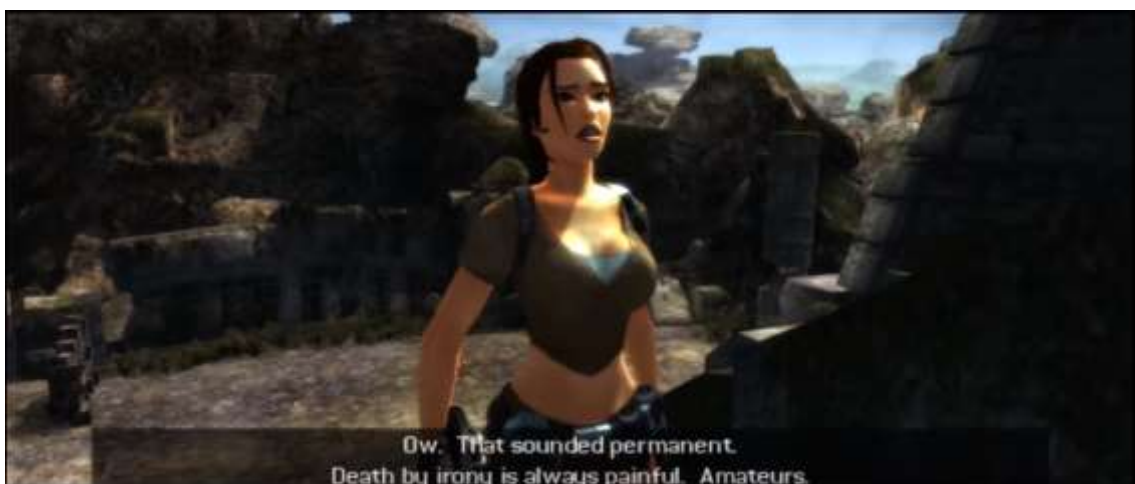
Lara uses a headset to communicate, PDA to access important area information and a special camera that can analyze her environment. Lara uses a **lot of gadgets** and is thus **technically skilled**.



Lara uses **stealth** twice and **patiently** listens to her enemies to get necessary information (**observant**).



When approaching a ruin, Lara seems to be **in love with her job** as an archaeologist/ treasure hunter, labelling herself as "... a lucky girl." The **tone of her voice** seems to be a lot **softer** than it was before, but she gets **determined** to get rid of intruders at the end of the scene, looking **tough**.



Ironic talk and **funny remarks**, made by Lara and her team members, are very frequent. The game feels **entertaining, spectacular (epic)**, but with a very **safe atmosphere** that lacks the feeling of being in danger.



Another flashback sequence, showing disappearance of Lara's mother, as she takes out a mysterious sword (**artefact**) out of an **ancient** mechanism. The **scene** is very **dramatic** and **emotional** due to the voiceacting and music. Lara, as a child, is left alone in the ancient ruins, calling her mother's name while music-box plays in the background. The **atmosphere** is supposed to **appeal to sentiments**.



When asked about a piece of the sword artefact, Lara **gets defensive**, protects her interests and gets mocked soon after. This is strange, as Lara has been very direct in the past and would definitely ironically ask about the artefact if she did not know its origin. **Another societal tie** is created with shared **past** with a **friend** (Amanda). When Lara defeats goons who were commanded to kill her, she approaches the ancient mechanism, similar to the one in flashback and mentions the fourth societal tie in the game, her **father**.



Lara shows **sentiments** as she says the name of her father and obviously **recalls loss** of her mother. Her cold-headed, ironic attitude is now layered with occasional shifts to **emotions and vulnerability**. The one she showed in The last revelation when storming off to help her friend, or in AoD when rescuing Kurtis.



Lara returns back to her mannor, showcasing **analytical** and **managerial skills** again, **giving orders to each team member**. Being greeted by her butler, Lara is a **wealthy aristocrat**, justlike she was in TR1 to TR3 and in TR5. But this time, Lara is shown to **use her riches to** fund her job and to **make her life more comfortable**. Winston packs Lara's baggage, Zip sets up meeting with Laras's friend Anaya and Alistair investigates the case, meanwhile, Lara walks away (to her room). Lara is **dependent** on others.





Lara seems quite **narcissistic** in the following scene. The word accessorize, in combination with the close shoot on her eyelashes, and the soft tone of voice, make her seem somehow shallow and **focused on looks & beauty**. With the game's artwork, two points have been already been accounted to this trait. The **glossy graphics** and some animation make Lara look like a barbie doll, instead of tough.



Hurtful **memories** and **sentiments** are brought up again, when Anaya speaks to Lara about their shared friend's death. Lara **shows** friendly **affection** to Anaya and, yet again, her voice gets emotional when speaking about the past. Lara shows her **caring** personality as she sends Anaya away at the moment of ambush.





Lara's **motives are all about relationships** in Legend, about her lost mother; heritage of her father; safety of her current friends; and past, torn relations with her past friends. In the **high-octane/ explosive rescue scene**, Lara saves Anaya from the ambush, **cooperates with her friend** and reduces enemy's trucks into pieces. Lara is weirdly **calm during action sequences** and **exhibits only low levels of deadliness and aggression, if any.**



Lara **exhibits remorse** for her past actions and **shares troubled mind** with her friend. This signalizes that Lara is not as self-confident and balanced as she was before, she is **doubtful.**



Just like in all previous installments, supernatural forces present a threat.



Another **escape scene** with **collapsing temple** plays. Lara tries to rescue her friend Amanda, but fails to lift the closing gate as the room floods with water. Lara acts like a **hero** and shows **determination** with lifting the gate. Again, the scene is very dramatic and the **tension comes from relationships more than from environmental hazards**.



Lara's **troubled past** is brought up again, Lara expresses her fear of losing more friends, recalls mother and thinks about Amanda. Lara gets **emotionall support** from her team as she makes more remorseful remarks.



Lara proves her **language skills** once again as she reads an ancient myth carved in a wall. The scene is commented by Zip and Alister, where the first makes funny remarks and the latter brings up more **historical information**. The history which forms Legend's storyline is **based on real cultures and their mythology**, but is, of course, altered.



Lara shows **knowledge of ancient cultures**, gives tasks to her team again and goes for Anayas rescue for the second time, responding only mildly aggressive and as calm as before.



Lara's meeting with holder of the sword artefact fragment is handled by ZIP and presented to Lara upon her request. The only **concern** that Lara shows is **about what to wear** for the party. Tone of Lara's voice and the selected phrases make her sound both lazy/ **spoiled** and **narcisistic**.



Lara emits **elegance** and **sexiness** in the black dress. It is the first time **revealing clothes** made it into an in-game, playable outfit. The dress code and animation make her seem **aware of etiquette** as well.



Lara gets **deadly**, **serious** and **courageous** as she talks about the foreshadowed danger. Lara emits **fierceness** in the later scene, where she quickly equips her combat accessories and faces her enemies.





Lara **speaks very directly**, just like in TR3, and exhibits **negotiation** skills as she tries to set a **business deal**. However, there is **impatience** in her approach and **provocativeness** in her words, which leads the proposed deal to a failure.



Lara’s provocative sarcasm drives the same enemy mad two more times. Lara acts **self-confident** to the point of being rude, but still uses a proper language.



Lara gets picked up and escorted in a chopper, sent by an acquaintance, to which she reacts: “Excellent. Tell him he’s my new favourite person,” which, again, sounds lazy/ spoiled, narcissistic and shallow. The line: “Depends on whether he was naughty, or nice,” doesn’t help the situation either.





The **design** of the **level** set in Ghana is quite **monumental** with an **orchestrated soundtrack** of the same, **epic proportions**. Just as Peruvian and Bolivian levels, it is designed to be more fantasy looking, **preserved** and **beautiful, rather than** showing its age with **decay**. Even though locations are not entirely untouched with the flow of time, there is at least one location with a **mechanism** that is **still in motion** or an **artefact** that is **placed in a spectacular venue**.



Lara defeats her enemy and takes claim of an artefact fragment. She is also concerned about wellbeing of her team as they get attacked by Amanda, during Lara's absence.



In the next, Kazakhstan, level, Lara proves to be **impatient** to the point of mentioning it directly, preferring direct, **high-octane** approach over stealth, descending down with a parachute. In a following cut-scene, Lara acts as directly, gunning her way through, using her language skills to bring some intellect to the mix.



The level continues to be explosive and action oriented.



Lara acts quite **apologetic** and wanting to fix her torn relationship with Amanda. After some explosions later, Lara shows **wits** while guessing the source of her communication channel hijacking.



Lara gets **emotional** and **yells** at Amanda. Proves to be technically skilled as she uses Tesla's technology to overcome the now tamed beast that attacked them both in the flashback sequence in Peru.



The level is ended with Lara showing **determination** with **persistence** as she crawls through a tiny tunnel into an area far, far away from her current location. The words: "See, who can get there first," imply that Lara is **competitive** and **looks for a challenge**.



**Eerie atmosphere** is central to the England level in Legend. Lara arrives with bike, changing her image for the fourth time.



Lara exhibits her **knowledge of history and mythology again**, as she is **analysing** the myth about the legendary Excalibur. The fragment of the sword is held by a statue that emits colourful light and makes the **scene feel beautifully magical** as a consequence. It is the second time Lara **shows respect**, as she takes the fragment from the English king.



Back in Croft Manor, the game continues with its **focus on mythology and artefacts**. Lara checks the fulfilment of goals she gave team members and sets new as she decides to travel to Nepal. Lara's **aristocratic social status** gets supported by Winston calling her "Lady Croft" and Lara lamenting father's public reputation. During the discussion, Lara gets emotional and atmosphere is meant to play the sentimental role, as suggested by the background music.





Memories, sentiments and other relational aspects get mentioned as Lara comes back to the plane crash site. Supernatural elements are demonstrated again with the re-forging of the mighty Excalibur.



“Anyone between me and that stone dies,” starts the final scene of the game. Lara is **determined, fierce, and deadly.**



Lara **shows no mercy** after her enemies (and a former friend, Amanda) don't react to her warning, she is **uncompromising.**





The villain Lara encountered in Ghana, James Rutland, dies after getting hit by Excalibur (probably). Lara is **apologetic**, after seeing Amanda in tears.





The story continues with a time paradox, Lara inserts the sword into the dias to be suddenly talking through time with her own mother. As the portal proves to be a bad communication medium, Lara's mother overhears Lara's instructions and listens to Amanda's instead, prompting her to pull the sword out of the stone to protect her child. This leads to the portal's destruction and her own disappearance.





In the next scene, Lara gets **emotionally overloaded**, **very angry** and starts **screaming** at Amanda: “Make sense right this second or I swear I” execute you where you stand!,” delivering the most **threatening** and **tough** lines in the serie’s history. Also, Lara’s voice gets **raspy**, as opposed to the sweet tone she has been using the whole game.



Lara gets **scary** as she yells: “WHERE...IS...MY...MOTHER?!,” firing shots around Amanda’s head with each pause. After this excellent and **impatient interrogation**, Lara **incapacitates** Amanda, but does not kill her, proving that she have **regained self-control**. Considering that Lara has been directly attacked by Amanda, she also shows that she can be **forgiving**. Lara commands her teammates, shows determination and **passion about** continuing **her quest** for finding her mother and cleaning father’s name.



## Tomb Raider Anniversary (2007)

Tomb Raider Anniversary was released as a homage to the original game, celebrating its figurative 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. The game was built upon an engine of Legend and didn't deviate from its premises. However, some differences could be seen. First and foremost, the **gameplay was silent**. No Zip and Alister, no continuous commentary, just the **ambient hum** of ancient temples, caves and pyramids. Lara would **not use any high-tech gadgets** and would rely solely on old school equipment, such as her grappling hook and basic flashlight (in the Wii version). The **game was puzzle heavy** and every level would act as a contraption on its own. **Manual grab** option and **inventory system** were **reintroduced** along **Lara's classic braid, shorts and green tanktop**. Overall, the game **resembled the classic pentalogy the most**, if all post Chronicles titles were taken into account.

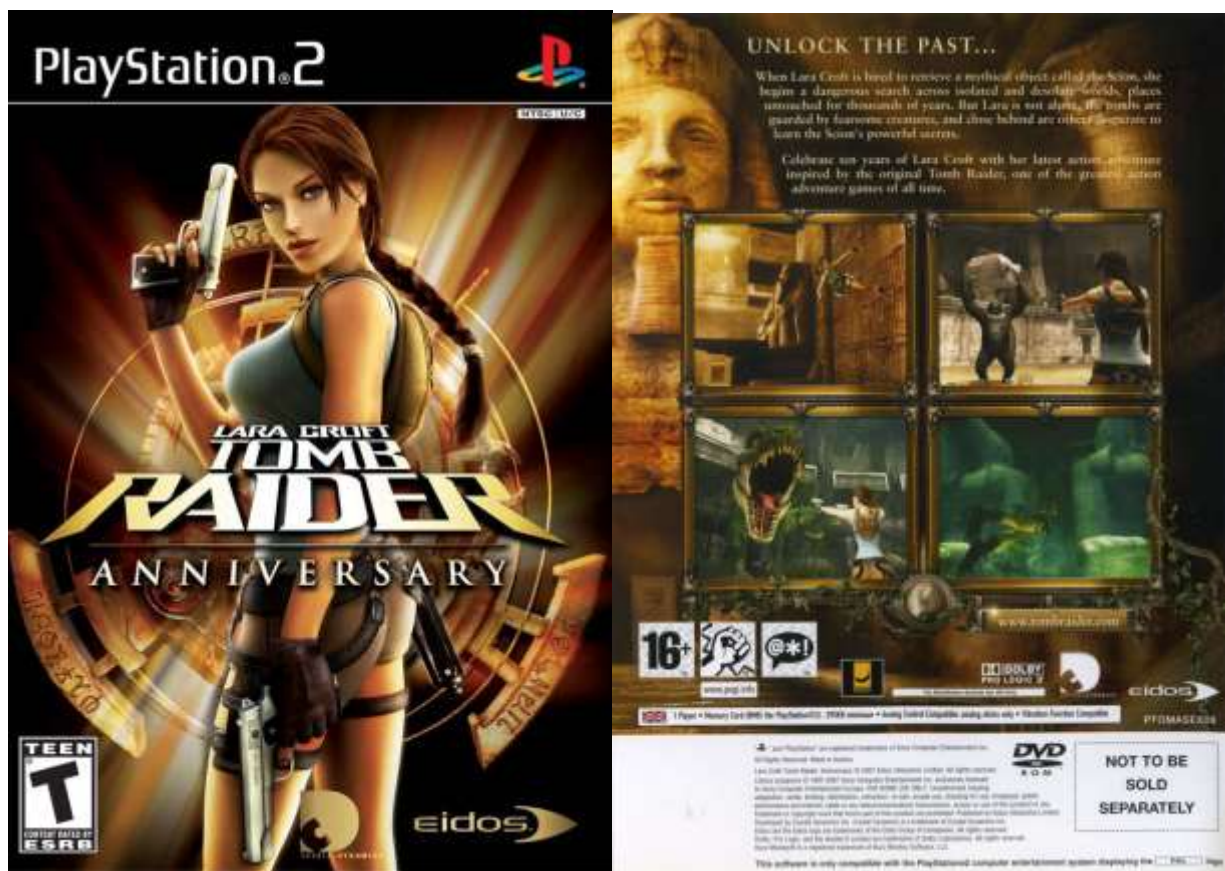
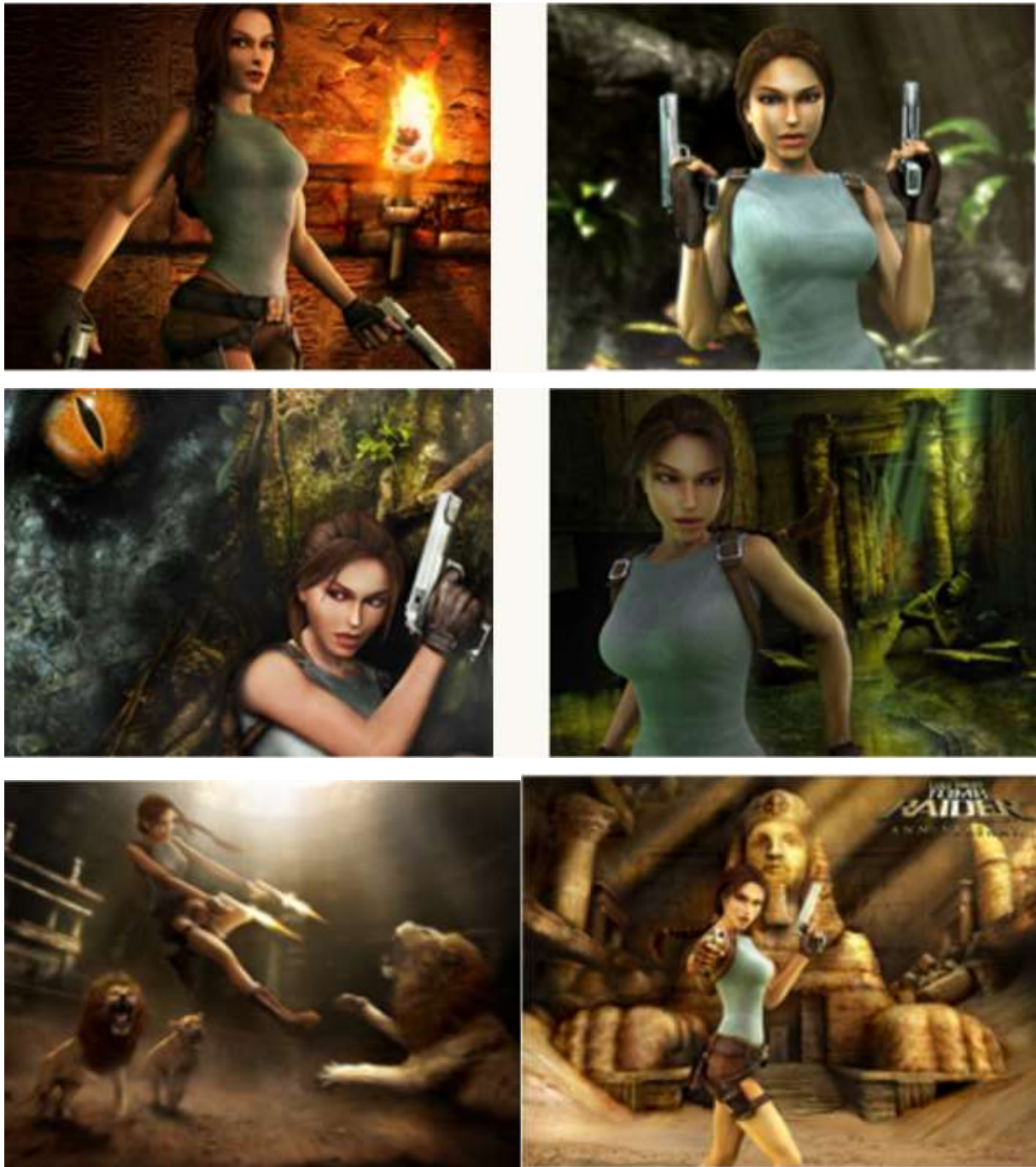


Figure 10-32: TRA box artwork  
Source: (Stellalune 5, 2016; MobyGames 3, 2016)

Just as in Legend, Lara appeared to be **less threatening** and **more femininely pretty** on the front cover, as seen in Figure 10-32. **Ancient settings**, including the **old-school, Indiana Jones imagery** were used for promotion, no high-tech gadgets or backgrounds could be seen. The main phrase on the backcover reads: “Unlock the past,” which correlates to the second paragraph of textual information. Tomb Raider and Lara Croft are **gaming icons, celebrities**. The promotional text labels Lara as a **mercenary**, it also implies her **courageous persona**. “Mythical; isolated; desolate world; untouched for years; guarded; secrets,” keywords are used to describe the **solitary nature of the game**, the **ancient settings**, and the theme of **unraveling secrets**.



**Figure 10-33: TRA promotional artwork**  
*Source: (Tombr Raiderchronicles, 2016)*

On the promotional artwork (Figure 10-33), Lara looked **self-confident, deadly & threatening, courageous, patient** and **athletic**. Lara was depicted in Egypt, Peru and Greece, which placed her in the role of **adventurer** and **globetrotter**.

**Story bridge** was built between the Core Design titles and those of Crystal Dynamics. Lara's **family** was mentioned in the story and her **motives were relational**; to find the Scion of Atlantis as the artefact Lara's father had been searching for. Although it is mentioned that she "plays for sports", few seconds later, the shared research with her father is placed as the central motive. Lara was also described as "**obsessed**" with her quest. The main **villain**, Jacqueline Natla, had **later appeared in the Legend's sequel**, Underworld. (YouTube 4, 2012)





As for Lara, the more **humane and vulnerable** personality from Legend had been transferred to Anniversary. Lara is **apologetic, more friendlier, caring, regrets losses of lives and doesn't want to kill**. Unlike the merciless and cold-headed persona, Lara is **saddened** by the death of her travel guide. Lara's **language skills, education and intelligence** are demonstrated with the ability to read ancient texts and to solve puzzles.



Lara is **athletic** as she defeats one of her adversaries, and **strong & threatening** in **interrogation** when it comes to her quest. **Irony** is preserved, but Lara doesn't keep her cool and acts **emotional**, switching from the aforementioned cold-headedness, which can be interpreted as a lack of self-control.



**Determination, deadliness, but also worried mind and sentiments** are brought into the scene with Lara being devoted to finishing her father's research. From all of the Tomb Raider titles, Anniversary Lara seems to be **most skilled in mele combat**, showcasing **quick reflexes** and other, **superhero skills**. Lara is **strong, doesn't run from a fight** and is **very courageous and direct in approach to danger**, even more than the original. At the same time Lara **does regret death**, even of her enemies, which makes her more sensitive and **empathic**.



Lara is shown as **analytical, thoughtful** and **inquiring**, unraveling the mystery of the main villain. The game makes **Lara present in every single cinematic**. Dialogue, whether Lara's own **self-reflective** commentaries, or her speech with other characters, has been extended. The **talkativeness is similar to AoD**, yet below the intensity of Legend, as **Lara remains silent during gameplay**. Unlike the 1996's original, Lara first engages in a **mele fight** with her kidnappers, shows no problem taking down a hulking brute with just one punch (**supernatural strenght**) and makes a **spectacular exit**. **Stealth** is also present as Lara secretly invades her adversaries' boat, or when she breaks in to Natla's headquarters.



**Impatience, deadliness** and **frenzy** from Legend are brought up again, as Lara encounters Larson, who prevents her from progressing further. **Doubtful** expression and behaviour lead to fatal encounter and end with **regrets and shock** as Lara kills Larson. **Lara tries to avoid murder, but does kill for the sake of her quest**.



**Regrets, vulnerability** and **worrie expression** are repeated when encountering the last two mercenaries. Lara seems to gain **confidence** and **strenght** with the last encounter, where she also demonstrates **supernatural**

**athletic skills.** Minor violence and **theme of torture is mentioned** with one of the mercenaries threatening Lara, multiple times, to cut slowly up into pieces with a big knife. All in all, Anniversary Lara seems to be the **most conscientious iteration of the heroine**, which also makes her feel **conflicted**. Unlike the AoD Lara, who seems to be confused by not being able to recall a past event, Anniversary Lara is aware of her actions and doesn't like what she sees.



Lara proves to be **incorruptible**, as she rejects offer given by Natla. **Thoughtful and self-reflective** traits are essential when Lara decides to abandon her, relationship oriented, quest and chooses the **heroic path of saving the world** instead. Tomb Raider Anniversary remains author's favourite, modern TR title, as Crystal Dynamics put the best from both worlds into one package. Strong, brave, and heroic Lara who could perform amazing feats, yet did not lack emotionality and thoughtfulness, was the best combination of them all. Not to mention the solitary atmosphere, beautiful, fantasy locations and puzzle heavy gameplay. For the author, TRA represents an ideal TR game.



## Tomb Raider Underworld (2008)

Tomb Raider Underworld was the final contribution to the trilogy which had started with Legend and continued with Anniversary. In the series' timeline, it represents the last known state of the globetrotting heroine, since the reboot series served as a prequel. Underworld was the first title to be developed for the seventh generation of consoles, and as such, represents the third migration in the series' history. The added processing power of Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 allowed bigger, more detailed locations, extra graphical effects and extended repertoire of expressions for characters. As the majority of games in that generation, Underworld feels even more **cinematical and fluid in its storytelling**. Unlike the reboot however, the **cinematics are far less concentrated** and the movie-like experience doesn't feel as limiting as it does in the latter. It can be said that Underworld was technically superior to Legend and Anniversary, but kept the central formula intact.

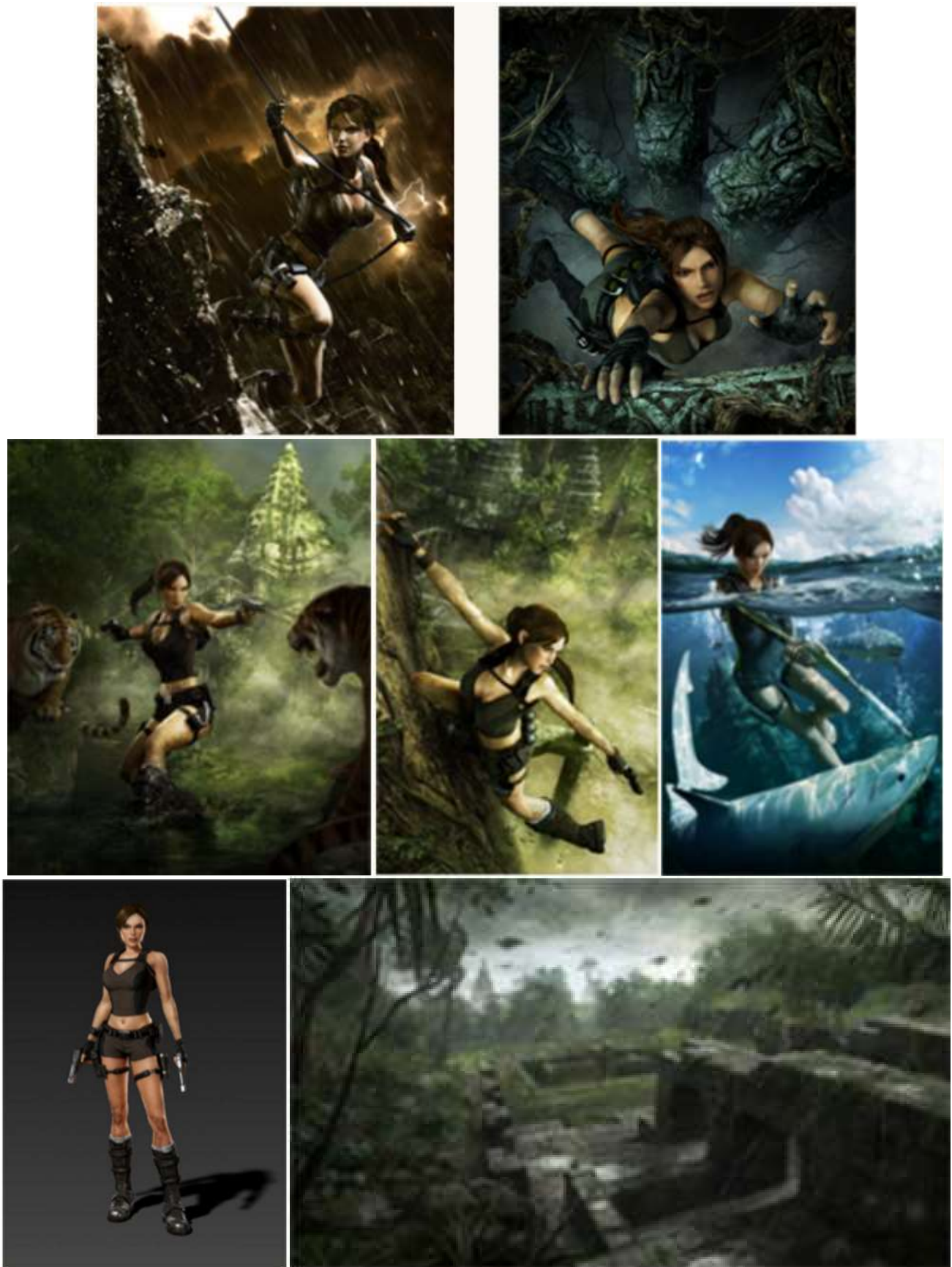


Figure 10-34: TR U box artwork

Source: (Reviewanygame, 2016; MobyGames 4, 2016)

Preceding the reboot series by five years, the **theme of injury, dirt and physical strain** could be seen on the front cover (Figure 10-34). Lara stands **steadfast and strong** on the cover, wielding her **iconic dual pistols** and **attire similar to previous designs**. The whole image feels **mysterious**, the green colour and equipment invoke **military** forces. It is known that the plan was to focus on **environmental changes** and that **Lara** was supposed to **react to weather**, which would be seen on the state of her clothes, skin and hair. The back cover read: “Explore everything. Stop at nothing,” which, for the game, implies **exporation** and, as for Lara, the theme of **determination**

and **globetrotting**. “Secrets of a forgotten power,” signal the act of **treasure** and **revelation**. “New level of challenge,” and “perilous journey,” require Lara to be **intelligent**, **resilient** and **strong**. The closing word “**epic**”, which was overused during the Legend era, underlines the **dramatic/cinematic** character of **presentation**.



**Figure 10-35: TRU promotional artwork**  
*Source: (Tombr Raiderchronicles, 2016)*



Theme of **environmental impact** and **weather effects** is repeated in game's artwork that is **dark, hostile** and takes place in **locations** that have been **affected** by **time**, as seen in Figure 10-35. As in the reboot, it is **hard to find a distinct location** or an **artefact**, as everything seems to **blend together**. Lara is **serious, deadly, focused, determined** and **does not smile** on a single piece artwork. One of the renders reveal the goal of Crystal Dynamics was to make **Lara** seem **more realistic**, beginning the theme of “fight with nature”, the **theme of survival**, hence the focus on Lara's weapons, tools, and functional clothes.



**Destruction** is the first thing players see when they start the game. Croft manor in flames is as **cinematic** and **dramatic** as **dark** and **ominous**. It's also a symbol of **uncertainty, hostility** and **survival**, as Lara's home, her safehaven, is destroyed. It makes the **story** more **personal** and connected to **Lara's past** and future.



Players are **teased** for continuation of the **story** as Zip, Lara's friend and team member, fires at Lara when she approaches him and Winston, her butler, in the blazing manor. The **scene** is **dramatic**, Winston tries to prevent Zip from killing Lara, actors yell at each other, Lara dodges a bullet, very dramatic. **Past, relational ties** are **important** for this scene to work properly. Otherwise the **emotions** of **betrayal** and **shock** are not evoked.



Although talking about her lost mother, Lara stays **strong** and even **jokes** at first. **Relational ties** are, again, the central driving power behind Lara's quest, they are the **main motive**.



Underworld Lara seems to be the most **educated**, building upon her vast knowledge of ancient civilizations and cultures, including the **language (skills)**. The whole monologue is very **thoughtful** and **analytical**, beginning with **passionate** remarks about the hieroglyphs. Dictaphone and HD camera seem to be Lara's second nature (**modern technology savy**).



**Quick reflexes** are utilized as Lara dodges the attack of **Kraken**, a **monster inspired by Greek mythology**. Lara makes an **ironic** remark: “Oh, that’s lovely,” using technology (modern **tech savy**) again to inspect the situation (**observational**). As for other expressions, Lara gets **scared** by the attack and appears to be **worried** about the threat: “I hope it’s as blind as it looks.” In the next scene, the ceiling gets dropped on Kraken’s head, leaving him injured, if not dead. Lara is **crafty** and can use surroundings in her advantage.



Lara’s vast **knowledge of cultures** is depicted again as she **thoughtfully** and **self-reflectively** contemplates over its functionality and existence.



Lara acts **thoughtful and educated** again, gets **ambushed, injured to the point of fainting** and presented as **helpless**. **Quick reflexes** help her to avoid further harm after the failed attempt for **bribery**. Being ambushed by many soldiers, Lara **analyses** the situation as unfavorable and **avoids direct attack**, her **skills** seem **semi-realistic**. Lara also remains polite.



**IT technology is used again**, Lara looks **angry** as she observes the mercenaries' ship, yet **maintains self-control** and stays silent, showcasing **strenght and determination**.





Lara invades the ship; gets **ambushed**; uses her **quick reflexes** to launch a **counter attack** from a **cover**; proves to be **intelligent** not to use open fire near flammable objects and avoids the **explosion**, which leaves the room in ruins. At the end, Lara looks **angry** as she gets up from the floor (**quick recovery, resilient**) to which she has been catapulted to after the explosion. Apart from the word “no”, Lara is rather silent and **cold-headed**.



Lara approaches her two past enemies, Jacqueline Natla and Amanda, in a **stealthy fashion**. Lara is **hostile** towards Natla, and at the same time, cracks a **joke**: “Jacqueline Natla, you just don’t know when to die.” “A trait we have in common,” replies the winged goddess, implying that Lara is **resilient**. Lara **keeps her cool**, proves to be **analytical** and **thoughtful**. Just as in Angel of darkness, Lara is **threatening** in her **inquiry**.



Lara is **determined** to stop Natla and Amanda and instantly fires multiple gunshots towards her escaping, past friend (**direct gunfire, impatience**). Lara is **cold-headed**, looks **threatening** and acts **self-confident** when she manages to fire the Thor's gauntlet out of Amanda's hands. Lara dives from an incredible height, showing her **athletic skills** once again. British Avalon, Norse Niffleheim and the legend of Thor, all inspired by **existing cultures and mythology**.



Loud, **analytical monologue** opens the next scene, set in Thailand. Lara is **self-confident** and demonstrates knowledge to her team, which seems to take background role in Underworld. Lara **operates alone**, yet is **supported from afar**. IT, in form of a camera and notebook, is shown again.



Just as the opening scene, the Thai level relies on **beautiful, bright graphics**, intervowen **with colour** (exotic birds & flowers). **Signs of wear** are shown on the **level's architecture**, however, the **mechanisms**, just as in the Norse ruins, **seem to be intact and working**. Parts from **Hindu mythology** are quoted directly, letting players to actually educate themselves in the matter. Dictaphone (IT) is used in **this, and in the next**, very short, **scene**.



**Fantasy elements** and **eye-candy graphical effects** drive the game away from realism as Lara opens an ornamental door with Thor's gauntlet which also glows brightly in shades of blue. The level design is **magical**.





Another bright and spectacular scene is presented to players. Besides the continuous, **educated, language skilled** monologue, Lara seems **self-confident** and **light-hearted**. Up to this point, Lara has been very **teachable**, contemplated and used all the gathered information.



Lara sails away, once she has gathered all the necessary information, sharing progression with teammates again (IT). The tone is **confident** and chosen words **joking** and **lightweight**.





Just like in Legend and AoD, Lara has **managerial skills**, **shares her problems** and **delegates tasks**. The team helps her to proceed with the quest. Lara is referred to as “lady Croft,” by her butler, Winston, which reminds players about her **aristocratic** roots. Lara is **joking** and lights up the otherwise dark scene.



Although the next **scene** can be labelled as **sentimental**, since Lara uncovers an old diary logue from her death father, our main heroine stays **cold-headed** and **silent** as she picks up the second gauntlet of Thor.



**Inquiring, patient, strong and analytical** are Lara's traits for the next scene, which is finally shown in its full glory. Lara **delegates tasks** again and remains **cold-headed** even if the situation is dire; her house is ablaze and one of her friends just tried to kill her. **No hiding and whining** with emotional break down like in the case of reboot Lara.



Lara encounters her evil doppelganger, similar to the one appearing in the first Tomb Raider game and, logically, in Anniversary. **Surprised** by her speed and agility, Lara fails to defeat the pyromaniac and save her friend Alistair from being critically shot. Lara tries to save Alistair: "Alistair, hold on!" (**caring**), reacts **emotinoally** when he gets shot: "No!" and is **saddened** by his demise: "*\*Sigh\*, dammit*". Lara **swears for the first time** in the series' history, although dammit is nowhere near to her explicit vocabulary in the reboot.



**Alistair dies** after being shot by the doppelganger. This is **not followed by** a long, **tearful mourning scene, but with anger** instead.” What?! Alistair’s dead. And it’s just business as usual?” says Zip, to which Lara replies: “I need Thor’s belt to get his hammer. And I need the hammer to kill a god!”. Lara **analyses** situation and tries to find the best plan to dispose Natla for good, she is **cold-headed** and **rational**, to the point of being **slightly insensitive**. Lara even leaves the scene before the arrival of an ambulance. Halfway through the story, Underworld Lara seems like the **most threatening and cold-headed iteration to date**, which is strange since it directly follows Legend, where Lara seemed unable to control her emotions, which showcased her emotional vulnerability too often.



Dressed in black, riding a motorbike of the same colour through a **dark** and **rainy scenery**. Underworld Lara seems to have something in common with AoD Lara when it comes to **darkness, depth** and **melancholy**. Besides knowing how to operate a boat, Lara is capable of handling motorbike aswell, she is **skilled with vehicles**.



In the depths of Mexican jungle, Lara finds and describes the Mayan calendar, continuing with the **educated** and informative dialogue about ancient cultures. Camera and dictaphone are used again (IT).



Laras uses **intelligence** to solve the calendar puzzle and uncover a **secret** entrance to the temple.





**Mechanical skills, knowledge, thoughtfulness** and **quick reactions** help Lara to proceed further. Even though there are no explosions involved, the scene is very **high-octane**, since Lara nearly falls into a pit filled with sharp, wooden spikes.



The next cutscene repeats Lara's **knowledgable** monologue in which “**devious trap rooms**” are mentioned. The connectivity to existing cultures is present as well. In the following scene, **knowledgable trait** and the use of **IT** (dictaphone) are repeated.



Same traits are repeated for the third time in a row. Lara enters yet another **fantasy scene**, with Norse statues spewing out bright, blue liquid into a transparent pool. **Undead**, as one of the most popular fantasy creatures, are mentioned and appear as Lara's enemies later on.



**Fantasy, magical production** is continued to the next scene, where Lara discovers Thor's belt as another artefact needed to access Avalon and kill Natla.



**Self-confident and calm**, sitting on a motorbike (**vehicle skill**), using a modern looking cell phone (**IT**), Lara catches up with her remaining **teammate** ZIP to report progress and to check if given task are carried out dutifully (**managerial, splits tasks**).



Lara keeps contact with ZIP, praises him for the accurate coordinates that would lead her to Amanda and Natla (**managerial skills**) and **supernaturally** jumps over a big chasm with her bike (**high-octane**). Lara seems **self-confident** and **strong**. Scene where Lara silently stares down a Norse ruin follows.





Lara continues her quest for knowledge and understanding (**educated, self-reflective**) and uses **IT** to help to store her thoughts. The information given, about Odin and Valhalla, are part of an existing mythology. In the next scene, Lara remains silent as she has to slide down a collapsing slope.



Attacked by a thrall, Lara seems to **keep her cool** even when deeply **contemplating** about origins of the creature.





After another history lesson (**educated**), Lara acquires Thor's hammer, which is, symbolically, a rite of passage, since picking the hammer requires godlike **strength**. "Time to pay Natla a visit," can be considered both **comical** and **threatening**. The scene is **magical** and contains fantasy elements, such as coloured lighting, mysterious fog or glowing thunderbolts.



**Dark, cold and solitary atmosphere** gets even more intense as Lara **sneaks** aboard Natla's ship. Compared to the rest of the game, Lara gets **berserker** as Natla presents her the need for an ancient ritual to open the gate to underworld. Lara **screams at Amanda**: "You destroyed my home. You killed Alistair!", after she gets knocked out, Lara yells: "You can die too!" at the doppelganger while firing flurry of lightning bolts from Thor's hammer and finally makes a **frenzied scream** as she smashes Natla's glass prison (**destructive**). Lara **regains self-control** and stops right before killing Natla with the hammer.



Lara arrives in a motorbike (**mechanical skills**) and uses explosives to blast her way through a layer of ice (**destructive**).



In a complete silence, Lara **observes** Natla with her camera (**IT**) as she opens a **fantasy**-looking door for her.



The **fantasy** theme doesn't stop there and Lara uses the hammer, in all its electrifying glory, to open up the gateway. In a silence, with a **strong** looking appearance.



Lara finds her mother in the Underworld, but in a non-living state: “My mother is dead. My mother is dead. My mother died a long time ago (**sentimental scene**). You are not my mother,” says Lara to herself. Lara is **self-reflective** and **thoughtful** and **stays strong** as she shoots the zombie down to an either pit. However, the **scene** is **emotional** and Lara seems to be affected as she lays down broken on the ground (**vulnerable**).



In the same scene, Natla reveals her long-term plan to destroy the world by “raising Midgard serpent.” Being ambushed by doppelganger again, Lara is no match for Natla’s creation, although proving to be **deadly, athletic, courageous** and **resilient** when it comes to facing this threat. Lara is **betrayed** and pays for her **gullibility**.



In the same scene, Lara is saved by Amanda (**helpless, dependent**).





Lara forms a **team with Amanda**, who uses her **magic skills** to repell thralls to give Lara time to stop Natla. The **alliance** is formed on basis of **shared goals**, but unlike the partnership with Kurtis in AoD, no secondary reason (attraction/love) is part of the deal.



Lara **fires at Natla directly**, but **keeps her cool** in the following dialogue. More information about mythology, mixed with history are presented to the player.



Amanda uses her **magic skills** to repell thralls, but fails to dodge Natla's fireball fully (**explosive**), which leaves her injured. The **teamwork** is still tangible here as Lara works on destroying the ancient mechanism and Amanda helps her out.



Lara throws Thor's hammer at Natla without mercy (**strong, determined**). The armageddon device collapses (**destructive**) in a spectacular fashion (**epic**).



Lara helps Amanda to get up (**caring**), and uses her **intelligence** to recall the stonie dias portal from Legend. Together, they stand before the broken portal that requires one person to hold the cracked part of one of the pillars and the other person to pull **Excalibur** from the pedestal.



Lara puts her trust into Amanda (**gullible**) who shows a character by keeping her word. The scene is **sentimental** as it represents an act of **forgiveness** and somehow a renewal of **past**, friendly **relationship** between the two. The scene **requires knowledge of Legend's storyline** to have the desired, sentimental effect.



“Would killing me make us even?” tells Lara to Amanda, after they both escape through the portal. Lara is **cold-headed**, tries to **avoid unnecessary death** and emits **wisdom**.



“Goodbye mother. Rest in peace,” says Lara her final words. **Emotional music** plays in the background and Lara seems to get equally sensitive, but stays strong nevertheless. The LAU trilogy ends with this scene.

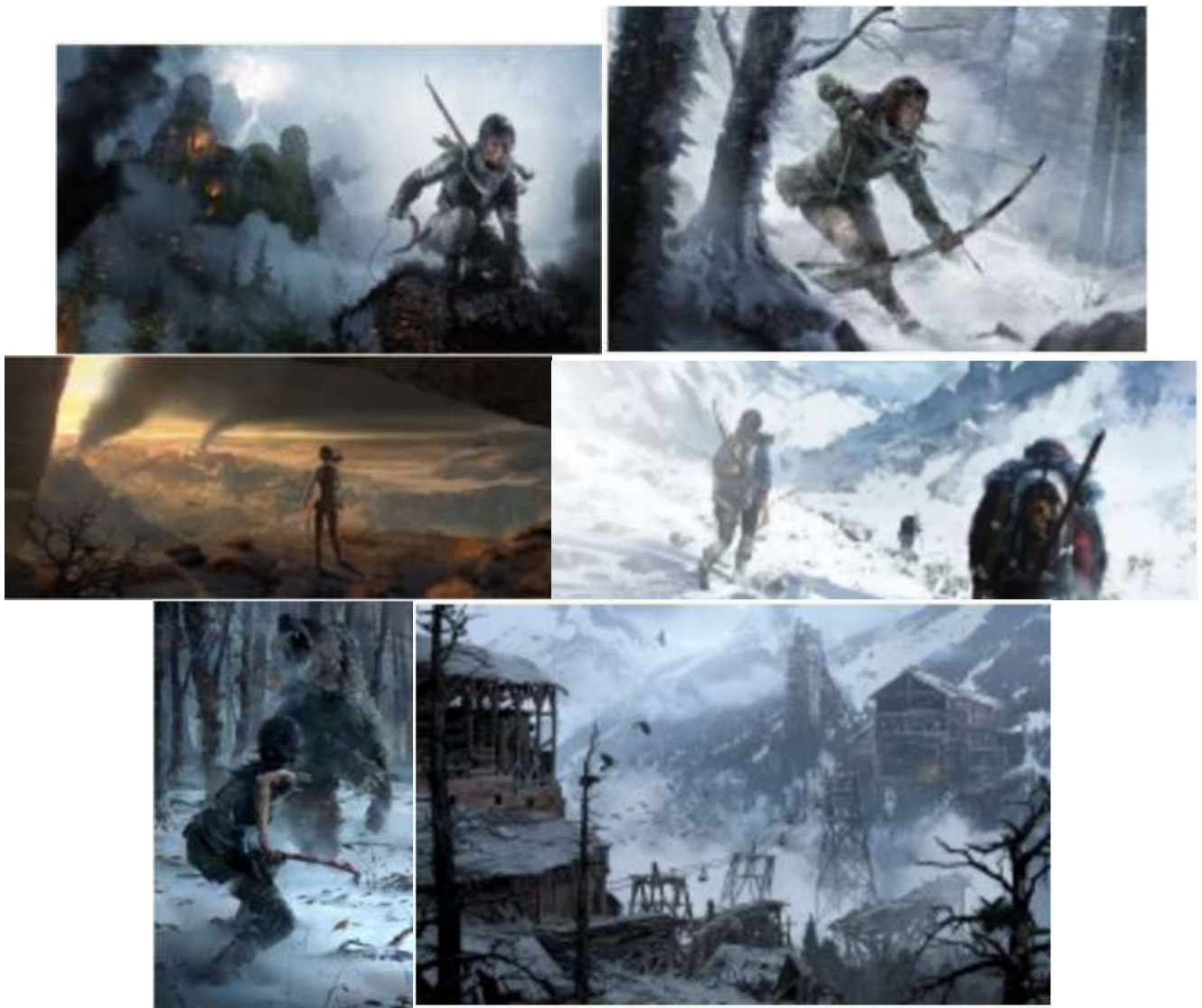


## Rise of the Tomb Raider (2015)



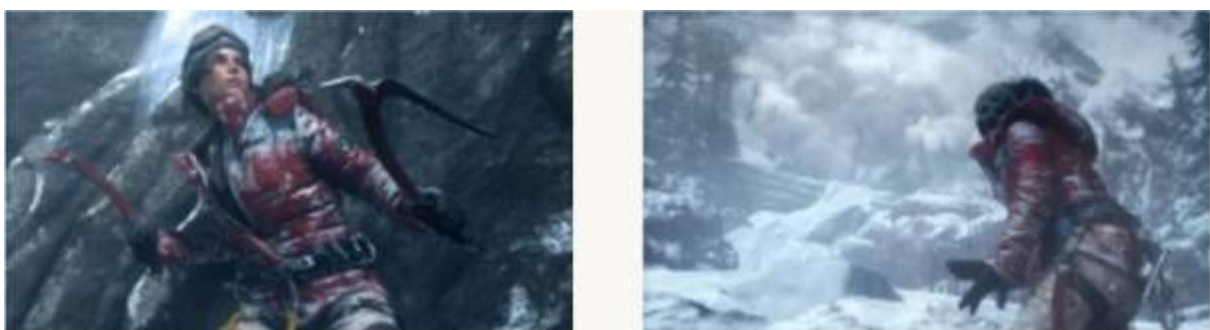
Figure 10-36: RofTR box artwork  
Source: (Walmart, 2016; Jogorama, 2016)

Rise of the Tomb Raider is the latest installment in the Tomb Raider series and the second entry to the so called “reboot series,” where players take charge of young Lara Croft. On the front cover (as seen in Figure 10-36), Lara can be seen in **extreme conditions**, wearing functional clothing to **realistically** fight the bad weather. Speaking of **realism**, **Lara’s proportions** seem to be quite **believable** compared to older games. Iconic dual pistols are nowhere to be seen on the cover and are replaced with a bow and double pickaxes, which are equipment of **hunters** and **mountain climbers**. Lara seems to be entering a **cave** on the cover, which is nothing unusual for the series, but the whole imagery make the game seem more about **extreme mountain climbing and survival**. “Survive” is the first word mentioned on the back cover, “**hostile world**” and “**expedition**” correlate with the mountaineering-hermit-theme well. Deadly tombs and tomb raiding are also mentioned, although having just one out of four images devoted to them in the cover. “Engage in guerilla combat” line on the back cover can be also accounted in favour of the survival, which requires **silent** and **feral ambush** on one’s **prey** in order to succeed. Lara also holds a knife, axes and a bow, which suggests **mele** combat and thus **close**, **physical experience** during battles and **wounds** as an aftermath. **Vulnerability** and **physical consequences** are also depicted with the eroded logo and Lara’s **bruised** and **dirty** body. Mentions about a **treasure**, **ancient artefact**, **arch villain** or a **quest to save the world** are **nowhere to be found**. The comic book heroism got replaced with **realism** and Lara doesn’t seem to engage in any spectacular moves neither on the front, nor the back cover. However, **capacity to learn**, **improve and overcome** may have been behind the title (“The rise..”). Lara is thus **teachable**, **self-improving**, **resistant** and **resilient**.



**Figure 10-37: RoTR promotional artwork**  
*Source: (Tombr Raiderchronicles, 2016)*

The artwork (seen in Figure 10-37) is just as consistent as during the The last revelation and AoD era. Extreme weather conditions, survival, hunting, expedition, and mountaineering are accompanied by **old** and **weathered industrial structures**. The environment, as well as the one being in-game, is rather monotonous, **lacks colour and a central monument/artefact**. Although existing cultures are part of the game (Mongolians, Russians and Greeks being some of them) **no anchoring locations** (such as Paris, Venice, Cairo, or Atlantis) **and fragments of mythology** (such as Kali, Excalibur, Damocles or Seth) **are to be found** in the final product.







**Figure 10-38: Promotional screenshots for RotTR**  
*Source: (Tombrailerchronicles, 2016)*

Promotional screenshots (as seen in Figure 10-38) were not captured to deviate from the concept either. Depicting unspecified mass of hostile environment, void of colour, apart from pantones of brown. Not a single image depicts Lara as self-confident, mysterious, angry & fierce (apart from the first image in Figure 10-38), or seductive.



The game starts with an introduction made by Lara's father, Lord Croft, which sets the main, **relational motive behind player's quest**. Right after that, Lara is part of an expedition **team** and stands aside her **friend**

**Jonah**, as introduced in the first reboot game. Lara's **wealth** is **mentioned very briefly** with "no amount of money is gonna get them through those mountains," implying that she hired people to help her reach her goal. Lara proves to be **resistant** and **determined** as she refuses to turn back, staring **thoughtfully** at tall and deadly peaks of a mountain range that lies ahead of her. Lara is **caring** and tells Jonah to stay in the camp. (YouTube 2, 2015)



Lara is **brave** enough to continue with the climb, but the **environment** proves to be **hazardous**, providing **high-adrenaline, action packed atmosphere** for the gameplay. "... you are going to give me a heart attack," says Jonah to Lara.



Lara is **dependent on her friends** once again and engages in a **stream of endless commentary** throughout the whole game. Instead of self-confident acrobatics seen in the intro scene of Legend, Lara's **skills are now limited** and make every move seem **exhausting to execute**. Because of this, young Lara **shows weakness**. She yells, moans and shivers as she ascends the mountain.





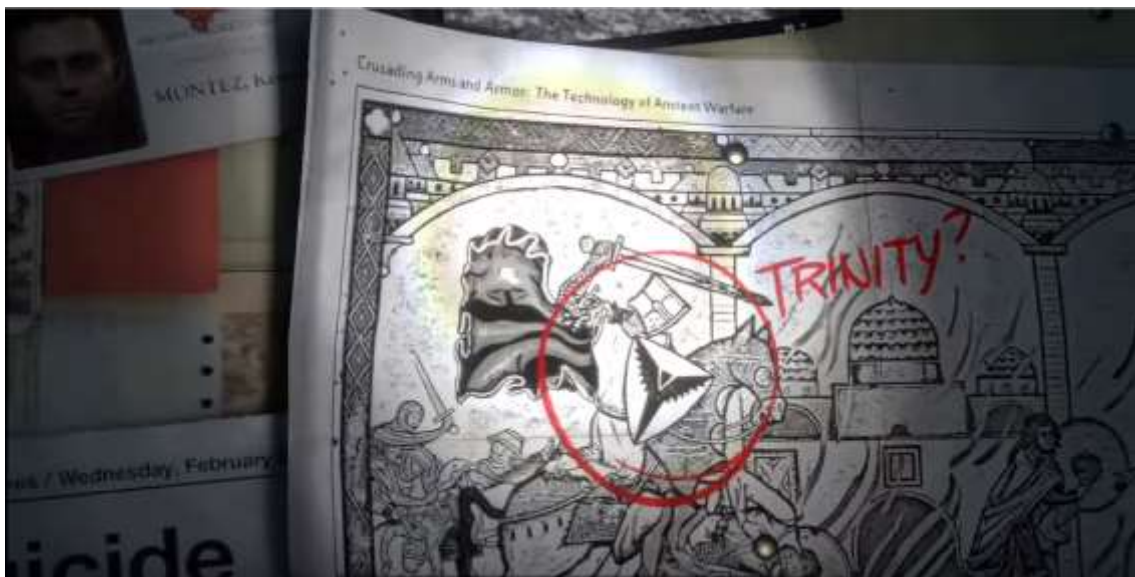
Since the reboot is an origins story, the technological level is on par with old TR titles, and behind technology displayed in Legend, Underworld and Chronicles. Lara is pictured using flares, which are later replaced with glow-sticks, to light her way. Lara battles with **extreme weather conditions** in a next few scenes.



“Let’s take it slow and steady. Just stay with me,” means that Lara is **patient** and **caring**. Unlike the original Lara however, young Lara **swears in critical situations**. **Emotions** seem to be **part of Lara’s tone of voice** and content of her commentary. She **lacks the cold-headed, ironic approach** of the past. In fact, the complete absence of it makes her sound like a different character altogether.



The **music** is **loud** and **dramatic**, the **tension** (coming from hazardous environments and injury) **unrelenting**. To increase the drama factor, Lara truly moans and whines throughout the whole game, providing **emotional reactions to every stimulus** (danger, injury, time strain, revelation etc.). Because of this, the game seems to be of **epic** proportions, highly **extroverted** and focused on **spectacular production**.



Although some historical figures are shown in the next scene, such as Rasputin and Joan of Arc, the main **theme of the story** revolves around two fictional, **religious** sects, apparently inspired by **Christianity**. Religious tomes decorated with gold, depicting a bearded prophet dressed in long robes; healing ill; doing other miracles and coming back to life (resurrection). The game also uses crosses, stained glass, halos and other Christian symbolism in its visuals. **Although artefact is present** (Divine Source, heals & grant's immortality), Lara's aim is to find it in order to fix father's reputation, thus any other motives are eliminated.



Lara acts **stealthy** in the next scene, shows her **quick wits and reactions** by grabbing an axe to get overly emotional (**scared**) when nearly hitting her family friend, Ana. Lara acts **apologetic, paranoid** and is very **passionate** (almost **obsessed**) about the forthcoming, archaeological quest. Lara believes in mythology and **supernatural**.



The story is **relationship heavy** and **Lara has past**. Just as in Legend, the past experience emotionally affects her and causes her to stagger as she reflects on it. Lara has **troubled mind/ unresolved issues**.



Just as the omission of Lara's mother, Amelia, represents a bit of a **canon violation**, the usage of electronic navigation stands for anachronism. It is unclear why would adult Lara use an old compass if she had GPS in her inventory as a teenager. Oddly modern notebook or headphones suffer from the same problem. Lara's **wealth** is mentioned again, but unlike in Legend, there is no luxurious helicopter, nor branded jeep to pick her up, Lara uses it **when necessary** and in considerable amount.





Lara is very **observant** and **analytical**, by noticing an upcoming danger and evaluating the situation to react to it properly. Lara is **betrayed** once again (in the series), **swearing** seems to be normal for all characters in the game. The jeep **scene** ends in a highly **explosive** manner.



Lara gets injured, accompanies it vocally, and is notably slowed down. She hold her aching head, falls down as she gets dizzy, which is seconded by blurry and shaky camera. **Lara gets injured**, her **pain is explicit** and **recovery slower** than before.



Lara demonstrates her **language skills** by translating historical texts and shows her **analytical** nature by interpreting frescos and combining available information with her existing knowledge. She also acts **destructive** while smashing through walls that stand between her and her goals.



The next scene is built on a **beautiful location** with an ancient **temple**. Players enter the area with the feeling of **revelation**, because the structure is a **secret, hidden** in Syrian mountains. The look is **spectacular** and accompanied by properly epic music.



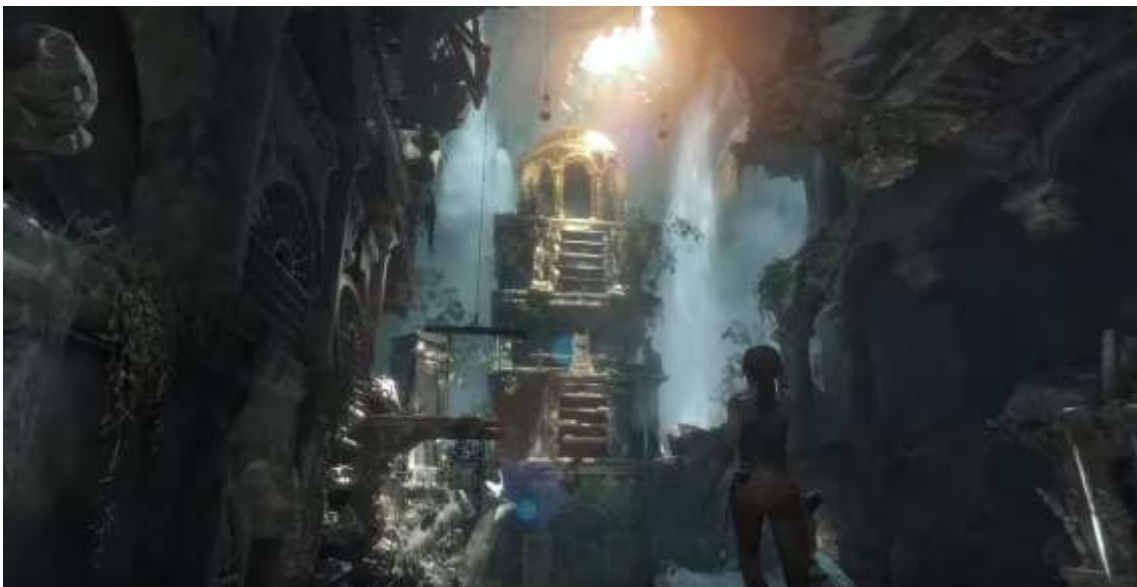
**Tension** is built with **hazardous environments** and stimulating music but also with **story progression** (antagonist will reach the artefact first, if Lara doesn't hurry up).



The next **scene** is more **mysterious** and **claustrophobic** as Lara explores a narrow cave. She gets **scared** when illuminating a skeletal corpse or shaking a scorpion from shoulder.



**Death traps** are also a source of thrill and a fitting part of any good TR tomb. It's a pity that traps in RotTR are so **scarce** and get revealed easily with the **hint system**. Lara escapes the trap in a rather dramatic fashion, nearly drowning in the process.



One of the **few** functional **locations** are encountered in the beginning of the game. Unlike other locations, this tomb is partially **preserved, with functioning mechanisms**. The central structure is apparently the goal and the defining object of the site, covered with shiny gold. "Stunning... we made it, Dad," says Lara after entering the room. **Puzzles**, as in all previous TR games, are present and players have to think to solve them. We can say that Lara is **intelligent** and a **problem solver**.





Lara demonstrates her **quick wits** as she swiftly hides in an empty coffin. Facing a group of armed men, Lara jumps out of the casket with a **deadly** look on her face, acts **brave** and **keeps her cool** during the conversation with one of the main antagonists, Constantine. Lara is as **direct** in her dialogue as before, but doesn't use irony or any kind of humour.



Relying on her **quick reflexes**, Lara steals a detonator from Constantine and saves her life by pushing the red button, sadly, **destroying the temple**. Another **thrilling escape** scene follows, the temple is collapsing and Lara **swears** to motivate herself to run faster. The sequence feels very TR-like, because Lara handles the situation perfectly and manages to escape the flood without getting injured or faltering along the way.



Getting back to her manor, Lara gets **scared** by unidentified noises, to suddenly find out her friend is paying her a visit. Lara is openly **happy to see her friend, expressing her emotions.**



Lara reveals **additional motives behind the quest**, and proves to be **socially conscious** by wanting to recover the artefact for **mankind's welfare**, but as author already mentioned, this motive is not repeated again. As before, Lara appears to be **very passionate** and zealous **about her quest**, showing **mild anger** when Jonah disagrees with her.



Lara **gets ambushed**, shows **quick reflexes**, and **fights** well, but loses. If it wasn't for her friend (**Lara is dependent**), she would get strangled to death, which is also somehow **more explicit** than in previous games, **because the high production value** (music, sound effects, voice acting, animation etc.) **makes it** very **believable**. What is different from the past encounters is her **realistically limited skills**, **lack of anger** and thus a certain level of **weakness** compared to the original.



Lara **doesn't kill the attacker** either and gives him chance to surrender (**merciful**). No matter how out of character this may seem at first, the previous analysis showed that this reaction is pretty common for Lara since the original trilogy.



Lara finds herself in Syberia, in a frozen **wilderness**. **Contact with her friend** is preserved. Unlike in classics, **Lara** gets severely **affected by the weather** (frozen hair, shaking body, thin voice etc.). Being a **caring** person, Lara tries to convince Jonah to find a shelter and to not to go looking for her. “I need to do this alone,” says Lara with a **worried** look on her face. This line is also true, since the **dialogue with team is less frequent** than it was in Legend, but **Lara still reacts** to the current situation **a lot** (emotions, motivational speech, environmental analysis/ hints, story etc.)





The **survival theme** is **heavy** as Lara wades through snow, searches for a camp and tries to find resources for fire. Her **determination** is sparked again by overhearing internal communication with her foes (**technical savviness** by using a transmitter). In a campfire monologue, she denies to give up and shows to be **persistent** and **resilient**. **Caring** trait is repeated with concerns about Jonah's welfare, "the pain of losing him would be too much to bear," she ends her monologue, showing emotional **vulnerability**. Lara also proves to be **crafty** as she creates her own bow. The theme of MacGyver-like crafting and survival were also one of the central topic of the first reboot game, Lara is **alone**, she is a survivor.



Lara gets attacked by a furious bear. Instead of shooting it with her guns, as she would do it in the original series, Lara **tries to escape**, but manages to fight the bear at the same time. Lara loses and falls from a cliff to unconsciousness (**injured**). For the sake of **realism**, the basic bow cannot be used to slay the bear, unless equipped with poisonous arrows. This is the first time Lara Croft **went for an expedition without her guns** (note: little Lara

from The last revelation and Chronicles doesn't count; the first reboot was a career start for her and in AoD she formally went to see her friend and got ambushed).



Memories, sentiments and relations are part of the next scene, where Lord Croft speaks with his daughter about her globetrotting future.



After the fall from the cliff, Lara needs to find a bandage to cater **wounds**, her **movement** and sight being **crippled** again. Lara is placed in a role of **scout, a pathfinder** who must find the way to a location. "Need to rest. So cold, so tired," she expresses her **human limitations** again.



Another flashback sequence, another relational tie. **Reputation of Lara's father** is mentioned again, but this time, he is referred to as a “renowned historian” which makes it sound more intellectual and less aristocratic than in Legend.



Lara is positioned as a **stealthy assassin**, **hiding** from her enemies, using **strategical points** instead of **direct gunfire**. After killing the rabid bear in the next scene, Lara doesn't express any empathy (maybe because she had experienced the sensation of hunting in the previous game).



Byzantine Empire, a **historical culture**, is mentioned as Lara approaches one of the environmental puzzles in a shape of a crashed galley. Reality is **mixed with fantasy**, as the galley is stuck in an ice structure after floating to Siberia, which is historically inaccurate.



Lara encounters one of the locals, showcasing **quick senses** as she reacts to the ambush, but switches from offensive to **diplomacy** stating: “I’m not your enemy”. When asked about previous battles with Trinity, the sect, Lara says: “I killed them to survive,” which, again, demonstrates how Lara approaches **murder, as a defence, an act of survival**. Lara’s **inquiring personality** is shown as she gathers information from Sophia and her **eloquent speech** serves as a good tool for that. Besides that, Lara acts **friendly** and wants to **make allies**, similarly to AoD. In the next campfire monologue, she worries about their wellbeing (**caring**).





**Helping nature** of Lara is shown as she interrupts an interrogation scene. **Empathy** follows when regrets about arriving late, which results in the captive's death, are made.



**More intense violence** is demonstrated when Constantine, one of the main villains, literally blinds one of mercenaries with his bare hands, slowly **maiming** both eyes with his thumbs. The scene is considerably long, is accompanied by painful screams and is quite graphic, although showing no blood whatsoever. The soldier keeps moaning on the floor, even after the act of violence has ended. In combination with voice logs, referring to people as “meat”, the previous, violent interrogation and the one that follows, RotTR seems like the most explicit TR to date. Especially in combination with **constantly injured Lara** and many **graphic death scenes** that are shown should players fail to execute a quick time event.



Lara's **good physique** and athletic skills are presented with her sliding down a long rope, although being not on par with the supernatural level of past. In the scene before, Lara uses **explosions** to get through a group of enemies. Lara can accept side missions to help the locals, which proves her **caring and heroic** persona and also **teamwork abilities**.



Lara acts **apologetic** and **blames herself** in the next scene, because she cares for her family friend Ana that has been "captured". Lara acts very **emotional** and **doesn't keep her cool** when Constantine enters the room for yet another interrogation, she **screams and swears at him**.



Ana gets choked slowly by Constantine, the game having 3 **interrogation/ torture scenes** by this moment. The **theme of betrayal** is utilized, leading Lara to nearly pronouncing the most **explicit word** yet, on Ana's account.



Lara is **offered to join the enemy**, but as in TLR and AoD, she **rejects**. Lara gets **angry** and steps up her **rude language** by one notch: "It's a no fucking way," and "Tell me Ana. Were you recruited by Trinity before or after you started screwing my father?" She then spits in Ana's face.



Lara gets **crafty** and immediately finds a way to get out of shackles, after being thrown in a prison cell. Lara looks **impatient** and even mentions it. Lara doesn't act friendly to her fellow prisoner and shows no trust, but that is quite reasonable, since she has just been betrayed.



Lara is labelled as **intelligent**, mentions her power of **self-improvement** and being **teachable**, and also a preference when it comes to team work (prefers to **work alone**). By letting the prisoner out, Lara demonstrates **trust** and **compassion**.





**Stealth** and **solo** approach are taken towards the next scene. However, Lara proceeds with a companion.



The same pattern repeats, but Lara shows to be **careful** and **observant** and does not want to storm into a battle she would not win.



**Religious content** is analysed by Lara, hinting directly to the judgement day, as sourced from **Christianity**. Instead of a direct conflict, **Lara sneaks away** as alarm is raised. Overall, **conflicts** are handled as **necessity** and **Lara avoids them** as much as possible, **never storming into a battle with confidence**.

In the next campfire monologue, Lara emits **persistence** and **belief in supernatural** as she talks about the quest. The need for support and teamwork is stressed (**dependence**) and Lara want to prove her **honourability** to the group, she **cares what others think of her**.



The next scene is very **high-octane** and **explosive**. Lara keeps the **team** together and cooperate with Jacob.



During the **escape** that follows, Lara is **limited in her diving skills** and instead of a self-confident and triumphant exit, she nearly drowns and has a **hard time recovering** from the experience. Her approach to **escapes** is very **emotional**, **skill straining** and leaves her **exhausted with injuries**.



**Resilience** and **athletic skills** are put to the test, as she suddenly has to run away from gunfire and missiles. The **escape scene** is very **explosive and thrilling**.



Lord Croft lies death with a gun in his hand, implying **suicide**. **Blood** is also present and the **sentimental value** of the scene is underlined with little Lara finding her father dead.



Lara wakes up from **unconsciousness**, **shaking**, sipping remedy brewed by Jacob. Lara is **dependent** and **shows weakness**. **Social exclusion**, **loneliness** and **bad reputation** are mentioned as Lara describes her father. History and **unresolved issues** weights Lara's mind down. Lara's **motives behind the quest** are mentioned again. **Social welfare**, and obviously **social status and reputation**, are expanded with **academic/ knowledge motives**.





**Determination, persistence and stubbornness** are displayed as Lara **stands by her principles** and **doesn't want to give up** on her goals, however she offer help with fighting the sect, Trinity.



**Teamwork** and **concern for others** are brought up again. "Can't get rid of me so easily," implies **persistence**.



The **environments** are **industrial, old, and decaying** and lack colour just as much as anything close to be called beautiful. Lara suggest **stealth** instead of direct approach, falls victim of a poor stability of the tunnel and has to **escape** the **collapsing structure**. This part of the **level is very claustrophobic** and relies on small, closed spaces. Just as in many previous scenes, the explicit language is ever-present and common for any NPC.



Lara seems to be really **dependent** on Jacob, loathes his absence and **cares** for his wellbeing. Lara also feels **lost** and **confused**, not only by pathfinding means, but also psychologically. **Hopeful** thinking is expressed in the campfire monologue as well. The campfire monologues make her **self-reflective** and **thoughtful**. Approaching a **spectacular location**, Lara shares her **passion for archaeology**.



Lara's **intelligence** and **problem solving skills** are tested throughout the whole game and especially in challenge tombs. **Athletic skills** and **quick reflexes** come in handy for Lara as another **collapsing temple scene** follows.



Another **set of religious references** take part in the story. Lara demonstrates **language skills** and **analytical thinking** by deciphering the message on the mosaic floor.



After an **ambush** situation, Lara shares **understanding** for Sophia's protective behaviour, acting **friendly** and also **helpful**. In a campfire monologue, Lara speaks about **conscience** and **(social) responsibility** for lives of others. Lara becomes **part of a group** of Prophet's followers and thus **receives commands**, her **authority (social position)** is affected by this.



During combat, Lara is **takes cover, avoids direct contact** and is rather low-key, moving in a **crouching** position. This is in a strong contrast with classic Lara who would storm into a fight with her head up and guns blazing.





Church, glass stained windows, praying altar with candles, god, faith and sins are used to form the next scene, using the **religious motif**.



Injury, destruction, suffering and death are shown as a **negative consequence of** Lara's **quest**. She shows **sentiments** and **understanding** by mentioning her own, personal losses of the past. **Help** is Lara's focus for the time being.



Lara continues to perform tasks for the group, following Jacob's commands. In a next campfire monologue, Lara feels **social responsibility** for the people and the **urge to help**. Need for **social recognition** and **trust** is repeated and Lara strives for both of these elements by being helpful.



She gains both few scenes ahead, as she helps Sophia and her men. Lara keeps **cold-head** as she tries to prevent her from going berserker, speaks **wise** and acts **crafty** to overcome barriers. The **game** then becomes a **cover shooter** and Lara has to shoot and explode her way through masses of enemies.



Lara is **relentless** in her **quest for knowledge** and **understanding** and **inquires** Jacob as much as possible. However this motive is not left alone and both **relational** and **societal** motives are mentioned soon after. Lara **splits from the group**, **but** is offered help by **Sophia**, who takes the role of **online backup**. In a campfire monologue, Lara describes **deaths** as “**senseless**” and expresses her doubts with “relying on the past”, concurrently, her thought lie in the past too, so this wouldn’t count as a character trait at all. Lara sounds **lost** in the last line of the monologue.



Instead of approaching Ana directly, as she would do in Legend or AoD, young Lara **sneaks** in the shadows. When surrounded, **Lara takes her hostage** from necessity. Based on her **observant**, **analytical** and **quick witted** persona, Lara uses environment to her advantage, ties a rope around her knee, blows the placed explosives and falls into a pit.



**Resilient and resistant**, Lara quickly recovers from a fall, **rejects Anna's offer** for the second time, **gets infuriated** and **shoots without a warning**, as in TRIII.



After deciphering some murals, Lara enters a different part of the temple, covered with **blood**, **impaled bodies**, **severed heads** and **burnt corpses**, one of them still being alive and **jump-scaring** the player. The soldier **vocally suffers from the burns** until player mercifully kills him.





Lara recovers the **artefact (map)** that would lead her to the Divine source. The **location** is suffering from **decay** and does not seem functional, neither does it include some magical effect, like the glowing statue of King Arthur in Legend, or armour of Horus in The last revelation.



**Knowledge** of chemistry saves Lara's life by successfully identifying sulphur as flammable. The **tension** of gameplay derives not only from **explosions** but also from **lurking and mysterious** beings that kill Trinity soldiers beyond player's field of sight.



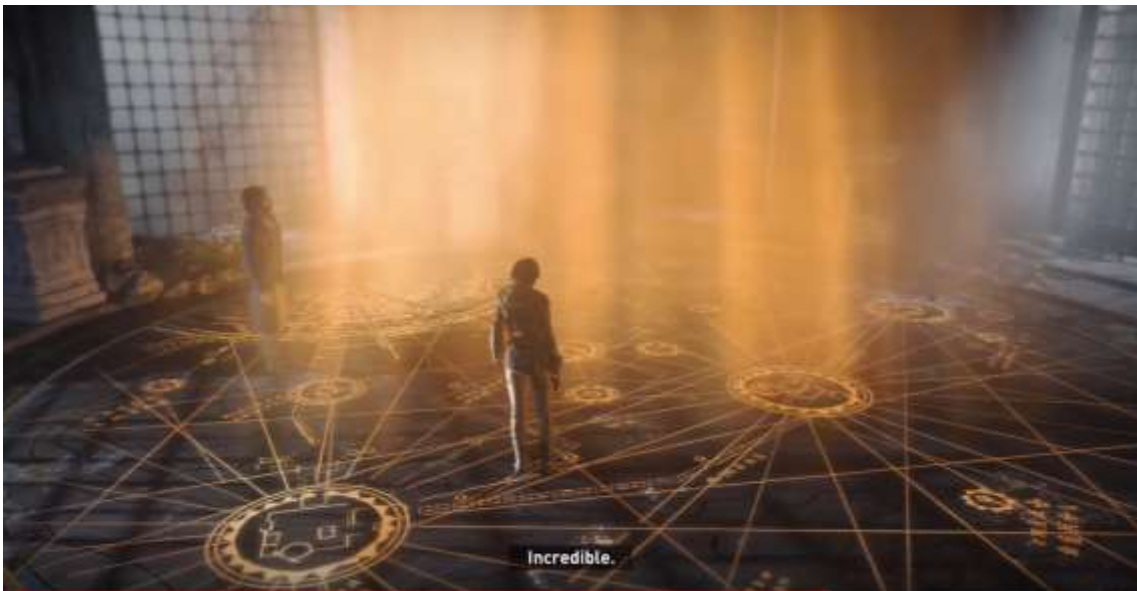
**Craftiness, observation, intelligence and problem solving** skills are put to good use when finding the way to solve the puzzle to get out of the tomb.



Under heavy attack, Lara makes a **triumphant escape**, leaving her with no injury. Lara's concern and dependability on **Jacob** is presented again and her friend, **Jonah**, contacts Lara as well.



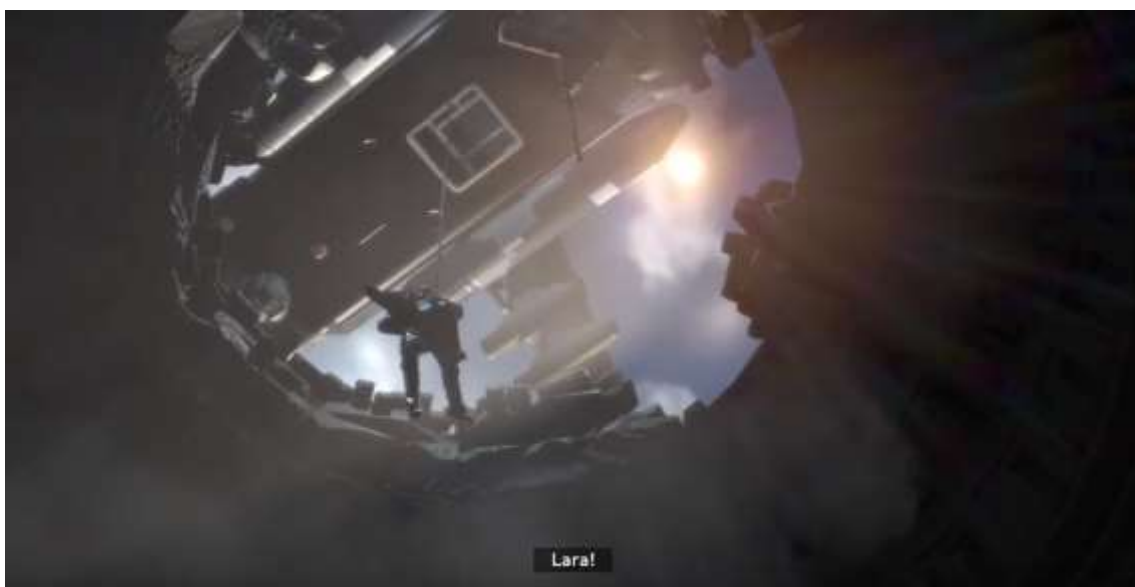
Lara has no problems **showing affection** to a friend, just as in The last revelation. **No jokes, no ironic remarks** have been made up to this point and continue to be absent in scenes to follow.



One of the very **few colourful and magical moments** are presented once Lara uses the map to uncover the location of the Divine source. Just as in AoD, Lara is capable of reading in a **technical** documentation. She notices an error (**observant**) in projection and **instructs her friend** to rotate the map.



The fact that Lara’s “friend” knew where the artefact was, yet still let her to go to a deadly tomb where she nearly died is left unnoticed. All the player sees is a smile full of love and wisdom.



The team gets ambushed and Jonah gets captured. Lara is **dependent on her friends**, has **strong relations with them** and storms for their **rescue (hero)**. Lara’s **top priority is friends**, even if it means the loss of the artefact. Lara is **thankful for help** provided to aid the rescue mission. During the campfire monologue, Lara sounds **worried**, but **determined**.





After falling victim to the extreme weather, Lara falls asleep (**collapsing from cold**). Another **sentimental** flashback plays, Lara shows **regrets** and the **series' timeline** is **violated** with the date of Lord Croft's death (2003).



Lara rushes to Jonah's **rescue**. Another **interrogation scene** is shown (beating, bruises) and ends with the victim being gravely injured. **Lara approaches** Constantine, the interrogator, **silently** and **tries to kill without a warning**.



Lara is **determined** to **kill** Constantine and instructs Jonah to do so. Shrouded with doubts, Jonah gives Constantine time to retaliate and **Lara is left helpless** behind a locked door and a bulletproof window. **Murder** and instruction for **mass homicide** are part of the script.



Lara acts **apologetic**, gets **serious** and **angry** for a **split second**, but her approach to an enemy is **underwhelming**, as she falls down, gets injured and has to use stealth to overcome them. The game's focus is then put its on **sentiments** again (Jonah being on the edge of death). **Lara cries**, her **facial expression** is depressive/ sad as for the most part. Long gone is the ironic/smug look on her face from Legend, the angry and determined face from classics, or even the depth of AoD Lara, all have been replaced with permanent **depression & pain**, which **also** affects the **tone of her voice**.



Surprisingly, Jacob (the prophet) shows to be a liar, using Lara's and his peoples' **trustfulness**. Lara solves this riddle herself, based on **observation**. Unlike others, Lara **doesn't give up** and tries to come up with a **solution** that would require **bravery**. **Supernatural** elements (Prophet with healing powers, Deathless, the invincible soldiers) are placed next to Lara's human capacity (gets **exhausted** as she reaches the next campfire).



The **second, preserved-looking location** is hidden in a big glacier. Unlike others, the Hidden city **feels alive** and utilizes **some colour** (gold statues, blue flames etc.)



The **magical/ fantasy atmosphere** is prolonged until the end of the game.



Unlike the Soviet installation mines, the city is a **vast exterior**. Lara **uses** ancient **technology** (catapults) to blast her way through gates. The **tension** is **story** and **action driven** as Lara crosses a collapsing bridge to get to the artefact before Constantine and Ana.





The final climb is **epic in scale**, **dramatic music** plays, **Lara swears**, **explosions** everywhere. The game relies on **cover shooting**, but it feels more **direct and action packed** than the previous stealth sequences.



The first part of the **boss battle** is done via **team cooperation**, where Lara comes up with a **clever** solution to take Constantine's helicopter down.



Lara gets injured when she falls into a fiery pit, but **quickly recovers**. She acts **strong** and **tough** although using **stealth** again to overcome Constantine. Instead of the usual ranged weaponry, Lara **attacks Constantine's back** with a **pickaxe** two times, to **stab** him in the heart with a **knife** soon after. The scene is very physical (**mele**) and **graphical (violent)**.



**Player is left with a choice** whether to **finish Constantine off, or not**. Either way, he dies and the storyline remains unaffected.



Ana finds the source before Lara who shows **forgiveness** by giving her the option to surrender.



Lara shows **wisdom** as she realizes that the usage of Divine source would bring more problems than solutions (corruption, “zombification”). She **sacrifices** her **goals for the sake of humanity (socially conscious)**.





Lara is **determined** to get rid of the artefact and is **not influenced** by Ana's pleas.





The artefact is destroyed, the soldiers vanish and the Prophet, cut from the life source, dies, labelling Lara as “**extraordinary**”, before he vanishes into thin air.



**Lara helps Ana** to get out of the temple and across the frozen wasteland. Being **analytical**, Lara recalls what Ana said during the final showdown and blames her for her father’s murder. Her trust is impaired as she doesn’t believe that Ana did not kill him herself. After she tells Lara the truth, that Trinity ordered his **execution**, she gets executed herself, with a sniper rifle.



Back in the Croft Manor, Lara's father (a recorder dialogue) mentions that he hopes that Lara will make her own "mark on this world someday," which can be interpreted as either **motives for inner achievement** or as a **motive for status recognition and fame**. Lara realizes that she has to undergo these quests **"for herself, not for anyone else,"** which would play in favour of the inner achievement. **"I can make the difference. I can make the right difference,"** imply that **Lara has the power to change the world, for the better.**



It can be deducted from the last scene that **Lara will go after the villains, Trinity, in a possible follow-up.**

## Summary

After analysing the last entry to the series, author has **summarized all Lara Croft's personality traits in a table**, as seen in Figure 10-39. Artworks, FMVs and cut-scenes, **e.g. audio-visual material** of all titles **was revisited** multiple times to **formulate umbrella traits**, to assess overall significance and to **reveal overlooked traits**. It is **revealed** in the analysis that **Lara Croft has been expanding as a character**. The more the franchise **matured alongside the video game market** and focused more and more on story, new interactions had to be added and Lara's persona had to be equipped accordingly. Over the series' lifespan, **contradictory attributes** were created, like cold-headed vs. emotional, scared vs. courageous. But overall, the **core persona** has been **preserved**, even though the **reboot series omitted one of Lara's core attributes, Irony and humour**. RM questionnaire (Appendix 5) was compiled from the gathered data.

Figure 10-39: Personality traits, skills and behavioural characteristics of Lara Croft

Personality traits, skills and behavioural characteristics of Lara Croft									
(sorted by their first appearance)									
TR I		TR II	TR III	TR TLR	TR AoD	TR L	TR A	TR U	RotTR
Analytical	Polite (language)	Caring	Crafty	Affectionate	Competitive	Apologetic	Conscientious	Self-reflect.	Diplomatic
Angry	Quick reflexed	Empathic	Heroic (soc. resp. & goals)	Careful	Cooperative	Dependent	Conflicted		Follows authority
Athletic	Resistant	Formal & well mannered	Homicidal	Incorruptible	Defensive	Dramatic	Brawler		Friendly
Business woman	Rich	Injured (slow recovery)	Provocative/ scathing	Problem solving	Doesn't believe in supernatural	Femininely beautiful			Honourable
Celebrity/ Iconic	Self-confident	Resilient (fast recovery)	Relational (has friends, family)	Respectful	Doubting/ confused	Forgiving			Hopeless
Cold-headed	Serious	Sultry/ seductive	Gullible	Wise	Emotional	Frenzied			Obsessed
Courageous	Sexy/ Attractive	Tech-savvy (IT/ modern tech)	Passionate	Worried	Managerial	Impatient			Sad & depressed
Deadly	Skilled (Mechanical/ vehicles)				Melancholic & wistful	Lighthearted			Scared
Destructive	Smiling				Nervous	Narcissistic			Survivor
Determined & persistent	Sneaky				Observational	Remorseful			Swearing
Doesn't kill unless necessary	Spectacular/ pompous				Relationship motives	Sentimental			Avoids direct contact
Educated (history, language)	Sportive (inner goals)				Stubborn	Spoiled			Vulnerable/ weak
Eloquent (persuasive)	Striving for knowledge				Tame	Troubled mind			
Escaping	Striving for power				Thankful	Uncompromising			
Globetrotting	Striving for social recognition				Thoughtful & calm (voice)				
Inquiring	Supernatural				Threatening				
Intelligent	Takes orders								
Ironic	Teachable								
Joking									
Merciless									
Mysterious									
Patient									

## Appendix 5: Questionnaire: The ideal Lara Croft

This questionnaire was created to identify the **ideal Lara Croft**, as perceived by members of Tomb Raider Forums.com. The following questions strive to investigate individual members' opinions about **how the ideal Lara should look like** and, as such, every answer is the right answer as long as it stays sincere.

Where the question description doesn't indicate otherwise, only one answer is required.

Thank you for your engagement,

Martin Šugra,

master student of Marketing & business on VŠB-TUO, Czech Republic.

### Relationships, social status & role of Ms Croft

- 1) Lara's social status (*pick up to three options*)
  - a. Aristocrat
  - b. Adventurer & archaeologist
  - c. Marginalised & rebel
  - d. Mercenary
  - e. Survivor
- 2) Teamwork
  - a. No team, just Lara
  - b. Lara is in a team, but operates alone (briefing possible before and after a mission)
  - c. Lara is in a team that continuously supports her online
  - d. Lara is in a team that goes exploring with her
- 3) Dependence
  - a. Lara Croft is an independent individual
  - b. Lara Croft is somewhat dependant on others (friends, team)
  - c. Lara Croft is dependent on others
  - d. Lara Croft cannot operate without proper support
- 4) Delegation of tasks
  - a. Lara doesn't share her problems
  - b. Lara can share her problems and can ask for advice
  - c. Lara shares her problems and delegates work on others
- 5) Stance towards authority
  - a. Listens to no one's command
  - b. Listens to commands, but decides on her own
  - c. Follows commands if part of a team (friendly connections)
  - d. Follows command of authorities



- 6) Lara's past & relationships (friends, family, business partners etc.)
  - a. No past, no connections
  - b. Brief past & weak connections, mentioned in the background
  - c. Structured backstory & some connections
  - d. Heavy past, unresolved issues & strong relationships
- 7) Lara's partner
  - a. Lara should be alone
  - b. Lara should have a partner, but only in the background
  - c. Lara should have a partner and they should work together
- 8) Relationship with partner
  - a. No partner
  - b. Business partner
  - c. Very close friend
  - d. Flirt & romantic interest
  - e. Outspoken love
  - f. Husband
- 9) Lara's family
  - a. Lara doesn't have a family
  - b. Lara does have a family, but is only mentioned in the backstory
  - c. Lara does have a family and it is very involved in the main story
- 10) Lara's motives for adventuring (*pick two main motives*)
  - a. Fame & social status
  - b. Knowledge & understanding
  - c. Relationships & family
  - d. Play for sport & inner satisfaction
  - e. To save the world
- 11) Stance towards wealth & riches
  - a. Not mentioned at all
  - b. Lara is shown being wealthy, but it's a background information
  - c. Lara is shown having wealth and uses it when necessary
  - d. Uses it and enjoys comfort

## Lara Croft the Hero

12) Lara's personality traits & skills (Please rate on a scale where: 1 = *not at all*; 5 = *very much*)

Analytical	Incorruptible
Apologetic	Inquiring ( <i>gets as much information from people as possible</i> )
Athletic	Intelligent
Believes in supernatural	Leader & manager
Business woman ( <i>makes business deals</i> )	Merciful
Caring	Mysterious
Competitive	Narcissistic & self-absorbed
Conscientious ( <i>takes responsibility for her actions</i> )	Observant (looks around & notice)
Courageous	Patient
Crafty ( <i>can use surroundings for her advantage</i> )	Remorseful ( <i>regrets her actions</i> )
Deadly ( <i>dangerous</i> )	Self-confident
Destructive	Self-reflective
Determined	Skilled in languages
Doubtful	Skilled with IT & modern technologies
Educated ( <i>in history &amp; mythology</i> )	Skilled with vehicles, mechanisms & tools
Eloquent & persuasive ( <i>knows how to talk and convince</i> )	Smiling
Empathic ( <i>can see into feelings of others</i> )	Spectacular ( <i>grandiose</i> )
Formal & well mannered ( <i>real lady</i> )	Stealthy
Globetrotting ( <i>traveller</i> )	Stubborn
Gullible ( <i>trusts other people</i> )	Teachable
Heroic ( <i>runs for rescue</i> )	Other 1
	Other 2

13) What makes Lara so special? (*Freeform answer*)

14) Lara's skills

- Comic book hero level (very strong, impossible to injure, perfect athletic skills, fool proof reflexes, astonishing intelligence)
- Semi-realistic (strong, can get injured, very good athletic skills, very quick reflexes, high intelligence)
- Realistic (believable strength and resistance to injury, good athletic skills, quick reflexes, above average intelligence)

15) Lara's skills in Rise of the Tomb Raider

- She's got superhero powers
- Her capabilities are just right
- She could be little bit stronger
- She is weak
- She is terribly weak
- I haven't played RotTR yet

- 16) Voice & expression (Please rate on a scale where: 1 = *Never*; 5 = *Always*) Strong & threatening
- Ironical & scathing
  - Joking & above it all
  - Thoughtful & deep
  - Vulnerable & worried
  - Passionate & dreamy
- 17) Lara's talkativeness (*Please rate on a scale where 0 = Doesn't talk at all; 10 = Talks all the time*)
- Doesn't talk at all (0%)
  - Talks rarely (1-30%)
  - Talks occasionally (31-50%)
  - Talks often (51%-70%)
  - Talks all the time (71%-100%)
- 18) Self-control
- Always cold-headed
  - Mildly emotional
  - Very emotional
  - Loses control over emotions
- 19) In an escape scene
- Self-confident exit, smile on Lara's face, triumphant success
  - Challenging exit, focused expression, minor injuries/ exhaustion
  - Very difficult exit, thrilling & emotional expression, heavy injuries/ exhaustion
- 20) Would Lara escape from a fight?
- Yes
  - No
- 21) Lara is shown being helpless
- Never, she is Lara Croft
  - Why not, she is only human
- 22) Injuries
- Lara doesn't get injured (resistant)
  - Lara gets injured, but recovers quickly (resilient)
  - Lara gets injured and can pass out (vulnerable)

## **Explicit content**

23) Approach to danger

- a. Direct gunfire
- b. Tactical shooting & cover
- c. Stealth with assassination
- d. Stealth to escape

24) Is Lara Croft a murderer?

- a. Yes
- b. Maybe
- c. No

25) Does Lara kill when it is not absolutely necessary?

- a. Definitely no
- b. She tries to avoid that, but sometimes she does, for the sake of her quest
- c. She does it from time to time, to get rid of barriers
- d. Killing spree? All the time

26) Swearing Lara

- a. No way! She's always polite
- b. In overwhelming situations
- c. Normally, a lot
- d. For the sake of humour

27) Preferred weaponry

- a. Ranged
- b. Mele
- c. Combination

28) Lara would use tranquilizer/non-lethal ammo towards animals

- a. Yes
- b. No

29) Lara would use tranquilizer/non-lethal ammo towards human enemies

- a. Yes
- b. No

30) Did you decide to kill \*Spoiler\* at the end of RotTR?

- a. Yes I did
- b. No I didn't
- c. I haven't played the last TR game yet



### **Lara Croft the (sex) icon**

31) Please rate the following statements (1 = disagree completely; 5 = agree completely)

Lara Croft is a gaming icon  
Lara is my role model, I look up to her  
I share some personal traits with Lara  
Lara has affected my hobbies & interests  
I would support Lara outside the main TR game franchise

Lara Croft is a sex icon  
Sex is part of Lara's persona  
Lara is sexy  
Lara acts seductive  
I don't mind Lara being depicted as sexy & seductive  
Some people play TR only because Lara is hot  
I tried TR because I found Lara to be attractive

Lara has affected my sexuality  
I like playing as characters of the opposite gender  
I have done TR themed cosplay  
I would like to do TR themed cosplay

32) Lara Croft is

- a. Heterosexual
- b. Homosexual
- c. Bisexual
- d. Asexual
- e. Other

33) Sensitive question

- a. I have (sexually) fantasized about Lara Croft
- b. I have never looked at Lara this way
- c. I don't want to tell

34) Lara's personality per title (Assess numbers where: 1 = Terrible; 5 = Awesome)

- a. TR I
- b. TR II
- c. TR III
- d. The Last Revelation/ Chronicles
- e. Angel of darkness
- f. Legend
- g. Anniversary
- h. Underworld
- i. Reboot/ Rise of the Tomb Raider

35) Your most favourite Lara

- a. TR I
- b. TR II
- c. TR III
- d. The Last Revelation/ Chronicles
- e. Angel of darkness
- f. Legend
- g. Anniversary
- h. Underworld
- i. Reboot/ Rise of the Tomb Raider

36) Your least favourite Lara

- a. TR I
- b. TR II
- c. TR III
- d. The Last Revelation/ Chronicles
- e. Angel of darkness
- f. Legend
- g. Anniversary
- h. Underworld
- i. Reboot/ Rise of the Tomb Raider

**Other info**

37) Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

38) Age group

- a. Under 18
- b. 18 – 25
- c. 26 – 35
- d. 36 – 45
- e. 46-55
- f. 55 & more

39) Siblings?

- a. Yes
- b. No

40) Education (currently studying or finished)

- a. Elementary school
- b. High school
- c. University

41) Social status

- a. Unemployed
- b. Student
- c. Employee
- d. Self-employed
- e. Retired

42) Sexual orientation

- a. I don't want to tell
- b. Heterosexual
- c. Homosexual
- d. Bisexual
- e. Other:

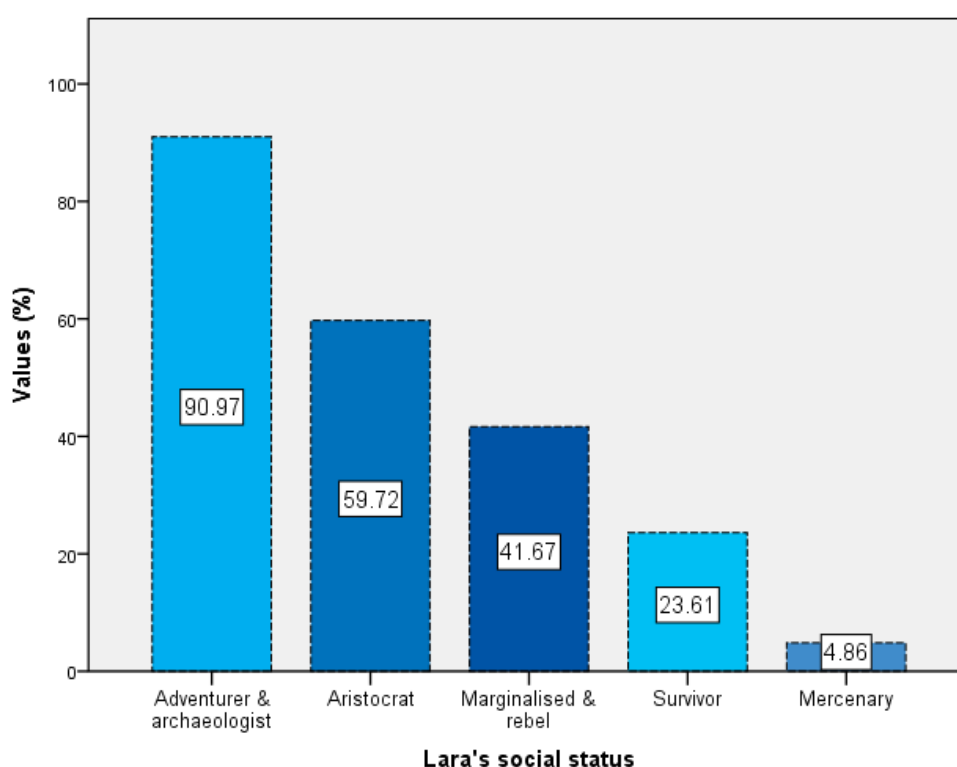
43) Where do you live? (country) (*Freeform answer*)

## Appendix 6: Questionnaire: Statistics

### V1 - Lara's social status

\$V1 Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Social status <sup>a</sup>	Aristocrat	86	27,0%	59,7%
	Adventurer & archaeologist	131	41,2%	91,0%
	Marginalised & rebel	60	18,9%	41,7%
	Mercenary	7	2,2%	4,9%
	Survivor	34	10,7%	23,6%
Total		318	100,0%	220,8%

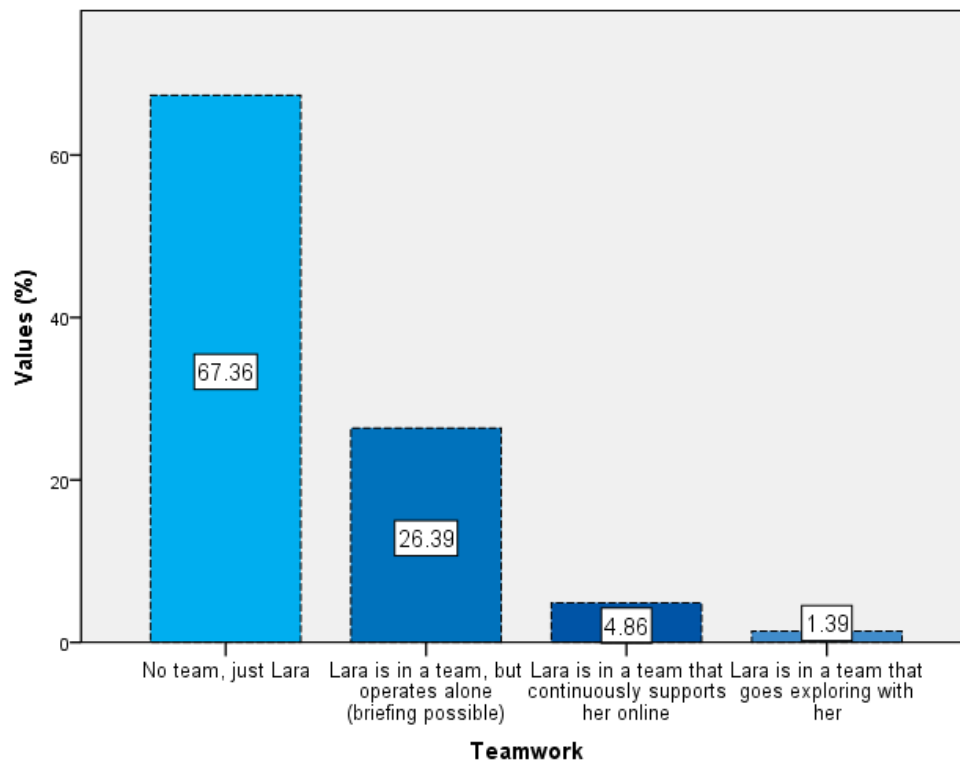
a. Group



### V2 - Teamwork

Teamwork				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No team, just Lara	97	67,4	67,4	67,4
Lara is in a team, but operates alone (briefing possible)	38	26,4	26,4	93,8
Valid Lara is in a team that continuously supports her online	7	4,9	4,9	98,6
Lara is in a team that goes exploring with her	2	1,4	1,4	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

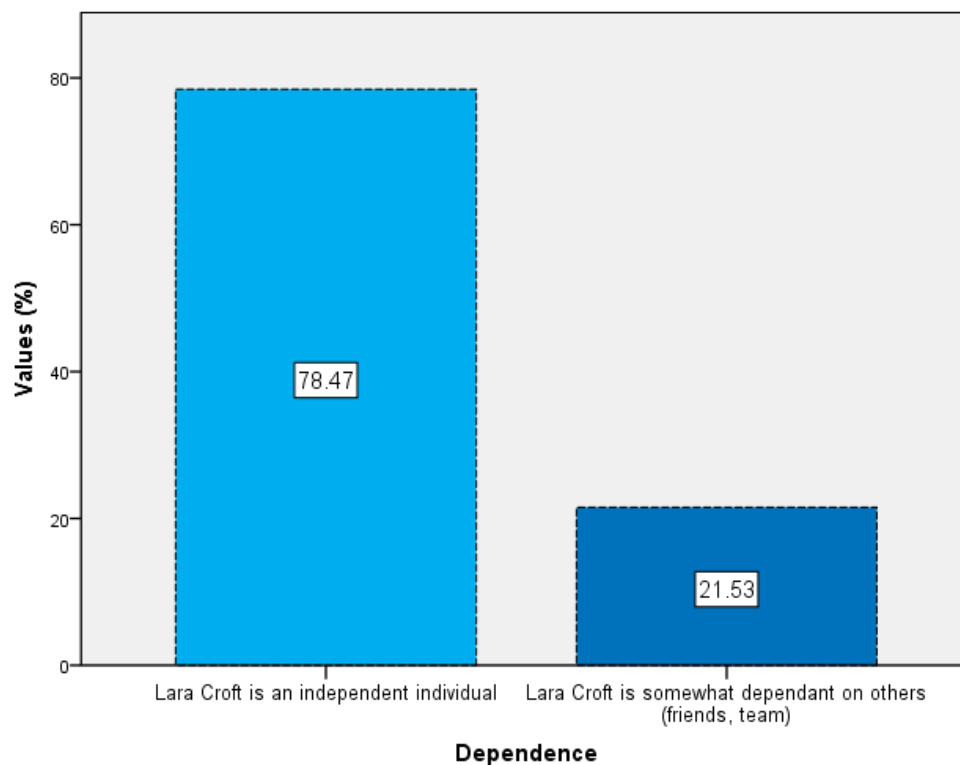




### V3 - Dependence

Dependence

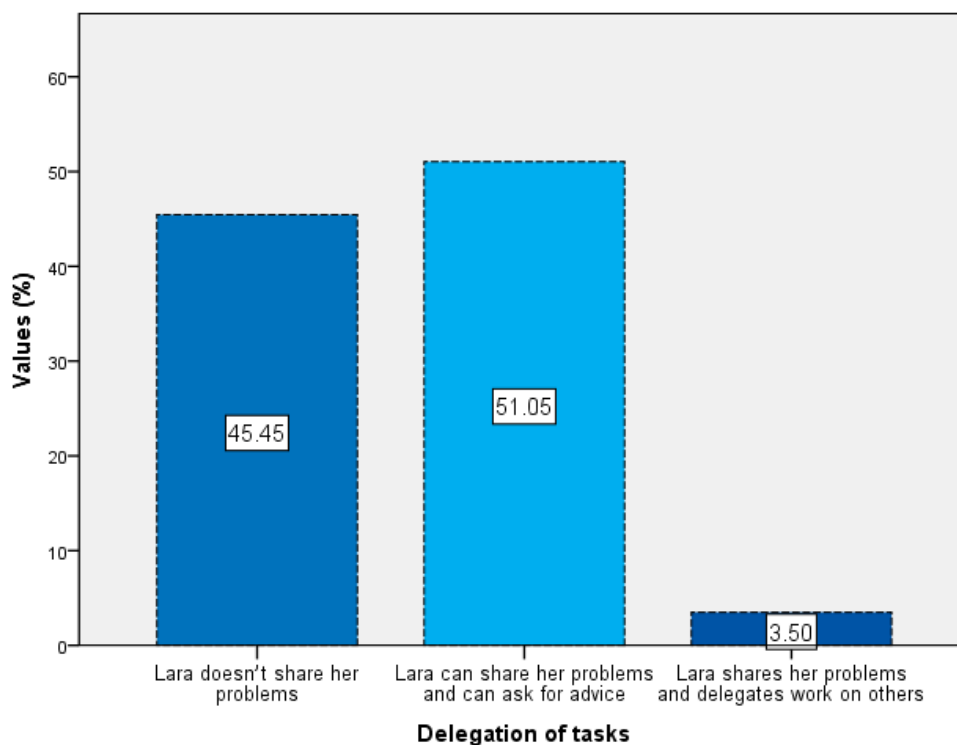
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lara Croft is an independent individual	113	78,5	78,5	78,5
Valid Lara Croft is somewhat dependant on others (friends, team)	31	21,5	21,5	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V4 - Delegation of tasks

Delegation of tasks

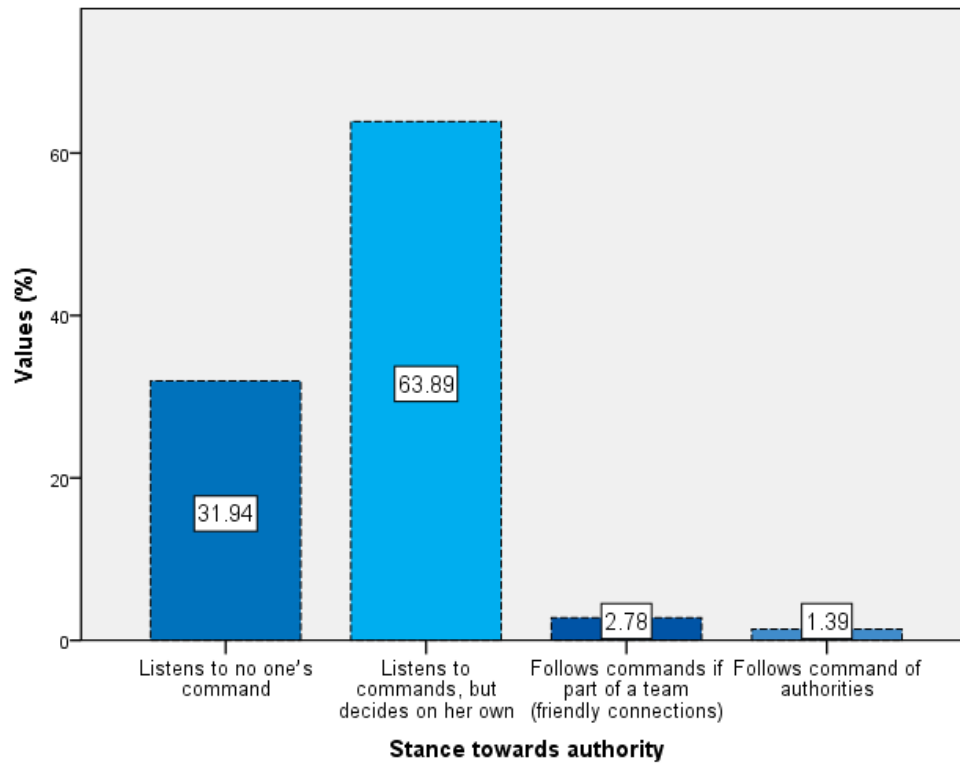
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lara doesn't share her problems	65	45,1	45,5	45,5
Lara can share her problems and can ask for advice	73	50,7	51,0	96,5
Lara shares her problems and delegates work on others	5	3,5	3,5	100,0
Total	143	99,3	100,0	
Missing System	1	,7		
Total	144	100,0		



## V5 - Stance towards authority

Stance towards authority

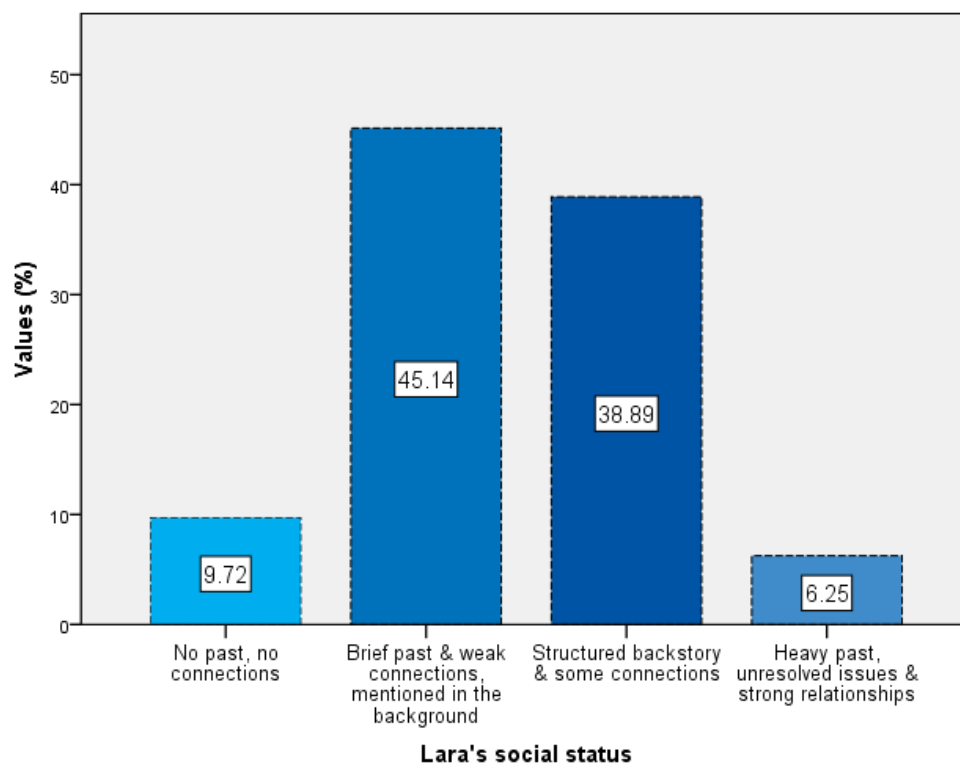
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Listens to no one's command	46	31,9	31,9	31,9
Listens to commands, but decides on her own	92	63,9	63,9	95,8
Valid Follows commands if part of a team (friendly connections)	4	2,8	2,8	98,6
Follows command of authorities	2	1,4	1,4	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V6 - Past & relationships

Lara's past & relationships

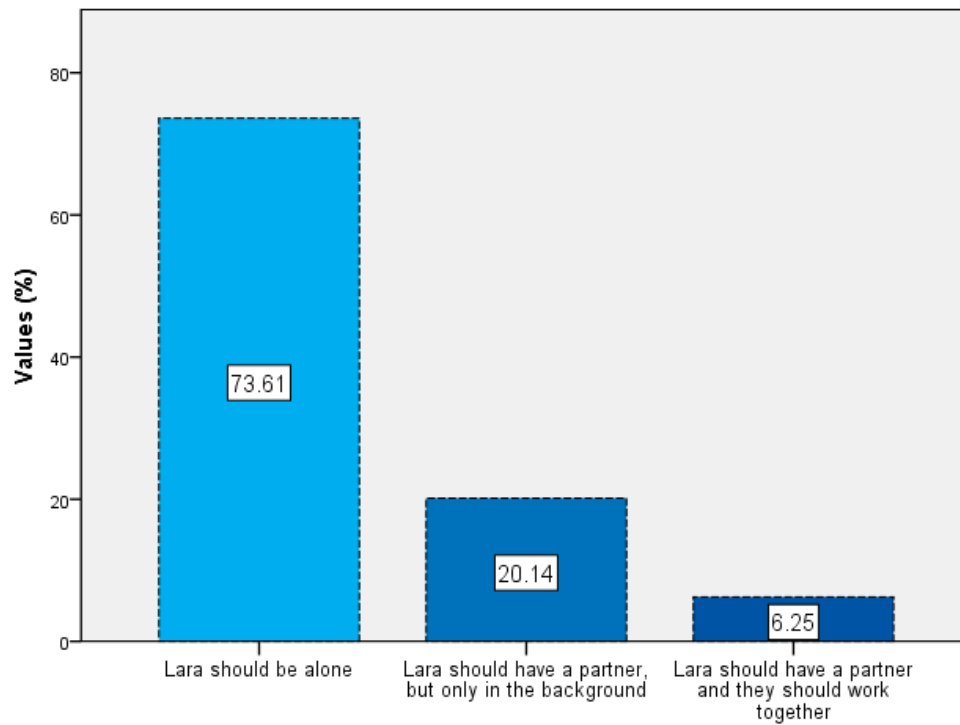
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No past, no connections	14	9,7	9,7	9,7
Brief past & weak connections, mentioned in the background	65	45,1	45,1	54,9
Valid Structured backstory & some connections	56	38,9	38,9	93,8
Heavy past, unresolved issues & strong relationships	9	6,3	6,3	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V7 - Lara's partner

Lara's partner

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lara should be alone	106	73,6	73,6	73,6
Lara should have a partner, but only in the background	29	20,1	20,1	93,8
Lara should have a partner and they should work together	9	6,3	6,3	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



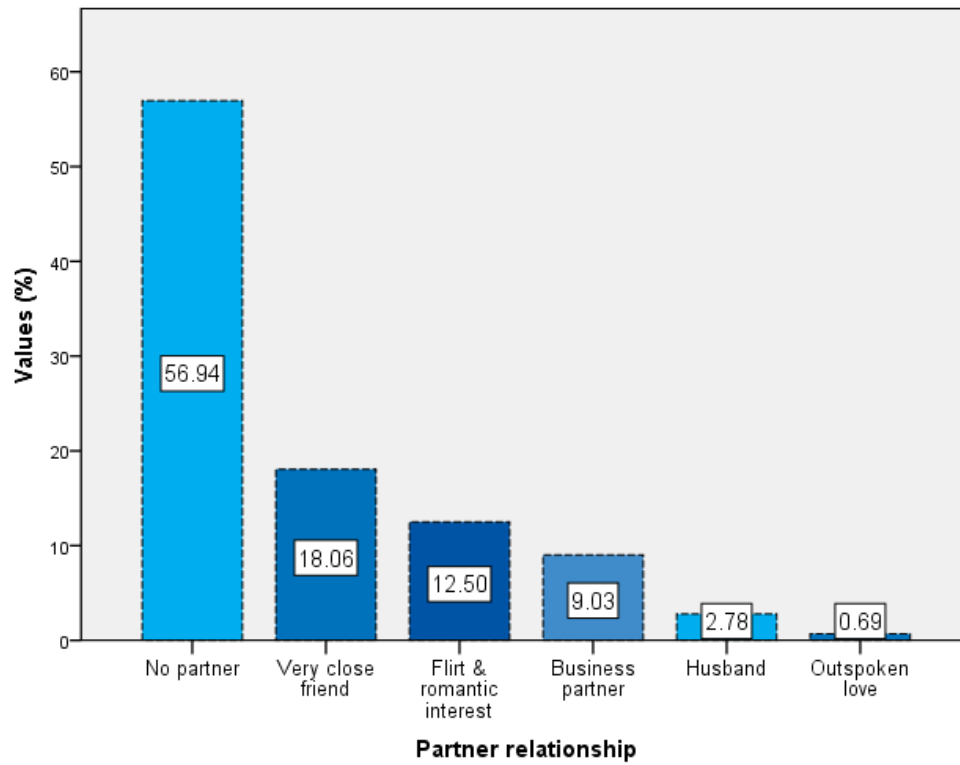
Lara's partner

## V8 - Partner relationship

Relationship with partner

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No partner	82	56,9	56,9	56,9
Business partner	13	9,0	9,0	66,0
Very close friend	26	18,1	18,1	84,0
Valid Flirt & romantic interest	18	12,5	12,5	96,5
Outspoken love	1	,7	,7	97,2
Husband	4	2,8	2,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

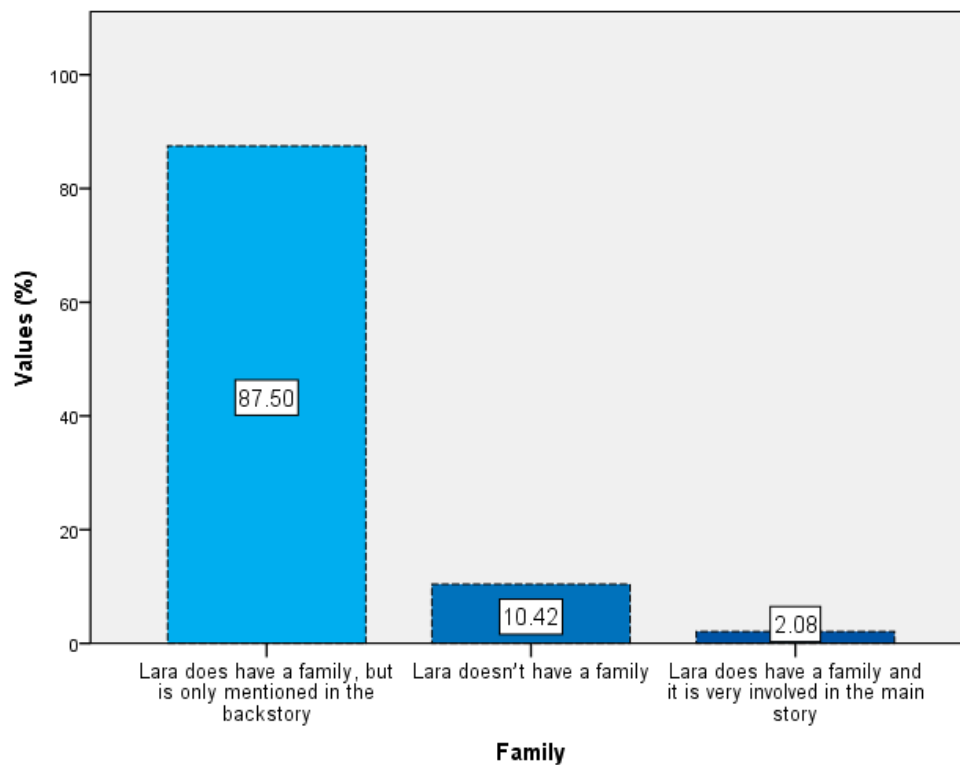




## V9 - Family

Family

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lara doesn't have a family	15	10,4	10,4	10,4
	Lara does have a family, but is only mentioned in the backstory	126	87,5	87,5	97,9
	Lara does have a family and it is very involved in the main story	3	2,1	2,1	100,0
	Total	144	100,0	100,0	

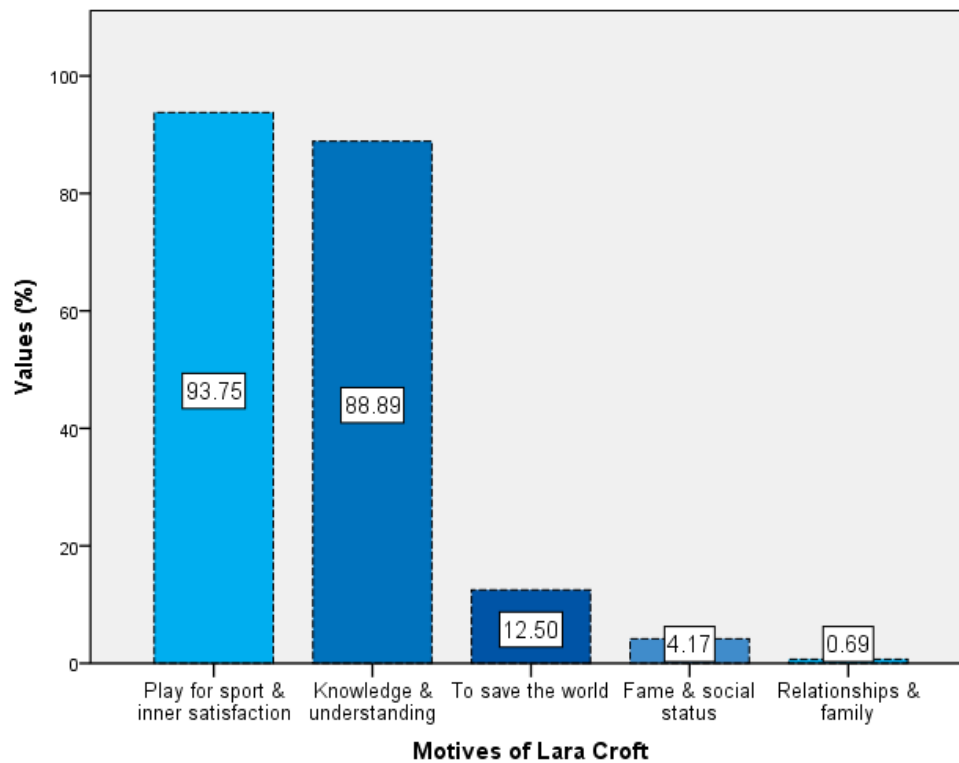


## V10 - Lara's motives

**\$V10 Frequencies**

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Lara's motives <sup>a</sup>	Fame & social status	6	2,1%	4,2%
	Knowledge & understanding	128	44,4%	88,9%
	Relationships & family	1	0,3%	0,7%
	Play for sport & inner satisfaction	135	46,9%	93,8%
	To save the world	18	6,3%	12,5%
Total		288	100,0%	200,0%

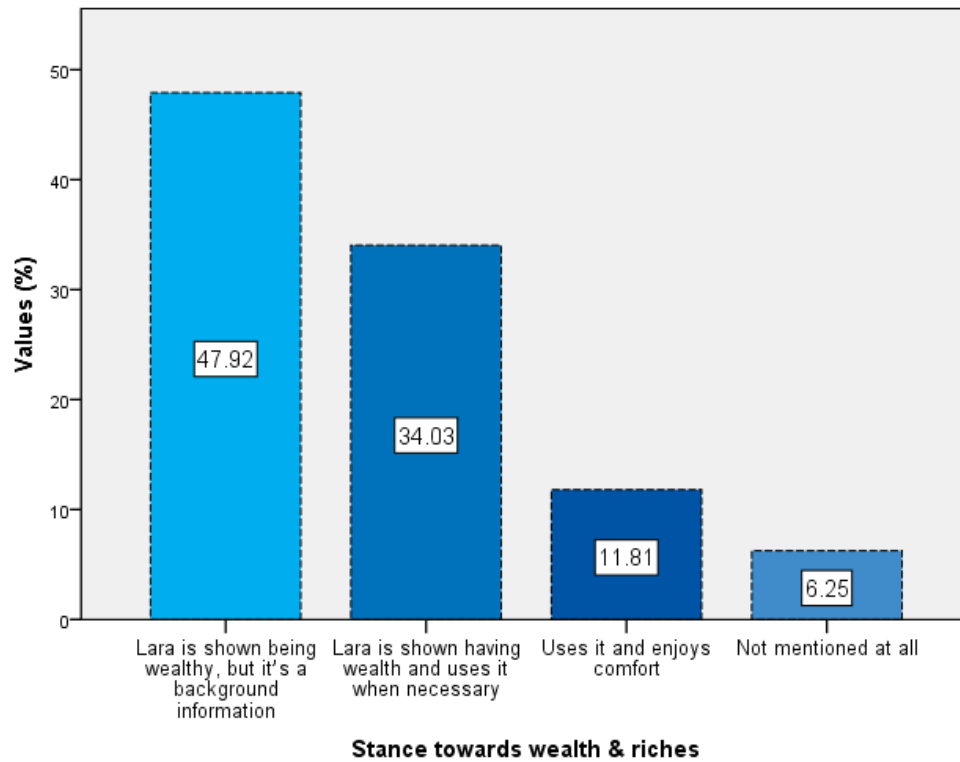
a. Group



## V11 - Stance towards wealth

**Stance towards wealth & riches**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not mentioned at all	9	6,3	6,3	6,3
Lara is shown being wealthy, but it's a background information	69	47,9	47,9	54,2
Valid Lara is shown having wealth and uses it when necessary	49	34,0	34,0	88,2
Uses it and enjoys comfort	17	11,8	11,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V12 - Personality traits of Ms Croft

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean
Intelligent	144	4,94
Determined	144	4,90
Globetrotting (traveller)	144	4,88
Educated (in history & mythology)	144	4,84
Athletic	144	4,81
Courageous	144	4,76
Skilled in languages	144	4,69
Deadly (dangerous)	144	4,69
Self-confident	144	4,60
Observant (looks around & notice)	144	4,57
Eloquent & persuasive (knows how to talk and convince)	144	4,57
Skilled with vehicles, mechanisms & tools	144	4,53
Analytical	144	4,44
Crafty (can use surroundings for her advantage)	144	4,42
Mysterious	144	4,18
Spectacular (grandiose)	144	4,17
Competitive	144	4,16
Inquiring (gets as much information from people as possible)	144	4,06
Believes in supernatural	144	4,04
Formal & well mannered (real lady)	144	3,89
Incorruptible	144	3,88
Stubborn	144	3,83
Conscientious (takes responsibility for her actions)	144	3,80

Leader & manager	144	3,78
Skilled with IT & modern technologies	144	3,78
Stealthy	144	3,76
Destructive	144	3,74
Self-reflective	144	3,53
Teachable	144	3,37
Heroic (runs for rescue)	144	3,31
Smiling	144	3,24
Empathic (can see into feelings of others)	144	3,16
Business woman (makes business deals)	144	3,13
Caring	144	3,01
Patient	144	3,01
Merciful	144	3,01
Narcissistic & self-absorbed	144	2,43
Remorseful (regrets her actions)	144	2,33
Apologetic	144	2,19
Doubtful	144	2,08
Gullible (trusts other people)	144	2,01

## V12 - TOP 15 personality traits of Ms Croft

TOP 15 personality traits

	N	Mean
Intelligent	144	4,94
Determined	144	4,90
Globetrotting (traveller)	144	4,88
Educated (in history & mythology)	144	4,84
Athletic	144	4,81
Courageous	144	4,76
Skilled in languages	144	4,69
Deadly (dangerous)	144	4,69
Self-confident	144	4,60
Observant (looks around & notice)	144	4,57
Eloquent & persuasive (knows how to talk and convince)	144	4,57
Skilled with vehicles, mechanisms & tools	144	4,53
Analytical	144	4,44
Crafty (can use surroundings for her advantage)	144	4,42
Mysterious	144	4,18

## V12 - TOP 5 no-go personality traits

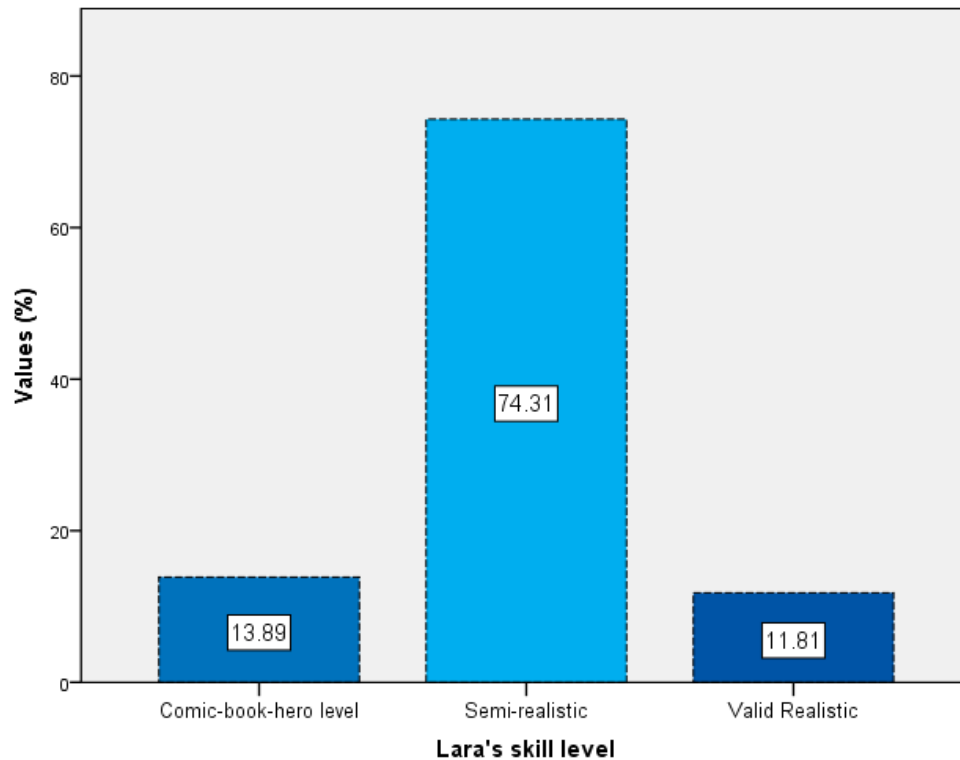
TOP 5 no-go personality traits

	N	Mean
Gullible (trusts other people)	144	2,01
Doubtful	144	2,08
Apologetic	144	2,19
Remorseful (regrets her actions)	144	2,33
Narcissistic & self-absorbed	144	2,43



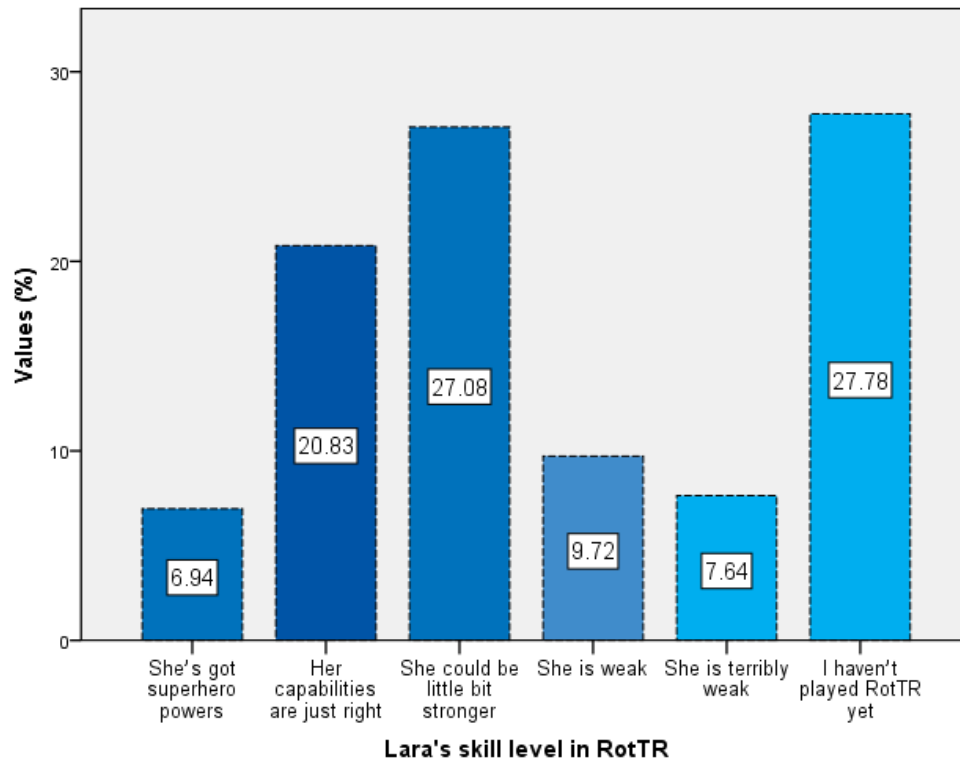
## V14 - Skill level

Lara's skill level				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Comic-book-hero level	20	13,9	13,9	13,9
Semi-realistic	107	74,3	74,3	88,2
Realistic	17	11,8	11,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V15 - Skill level of reboot Lara

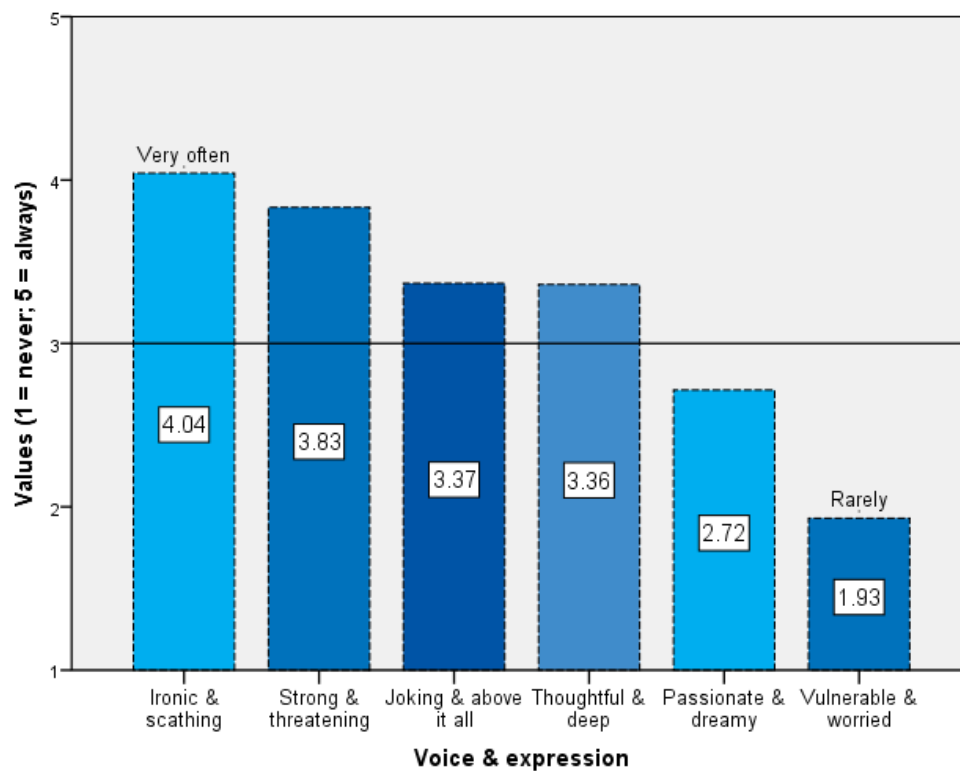
Lara's skill level in RotTR				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
She's got superhero powers	10	6,9	6,9	6,9
Her capabilities are just right	30	20,8	20,8	27,8
She could be little bit stronger	39	27,1	27,1	54,9
She is weak	14	9,7	9,7	64,6
She is terribly weak	11	7,6	7,6	72,2
I haven't played RotTR yet	40	27,8	27,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



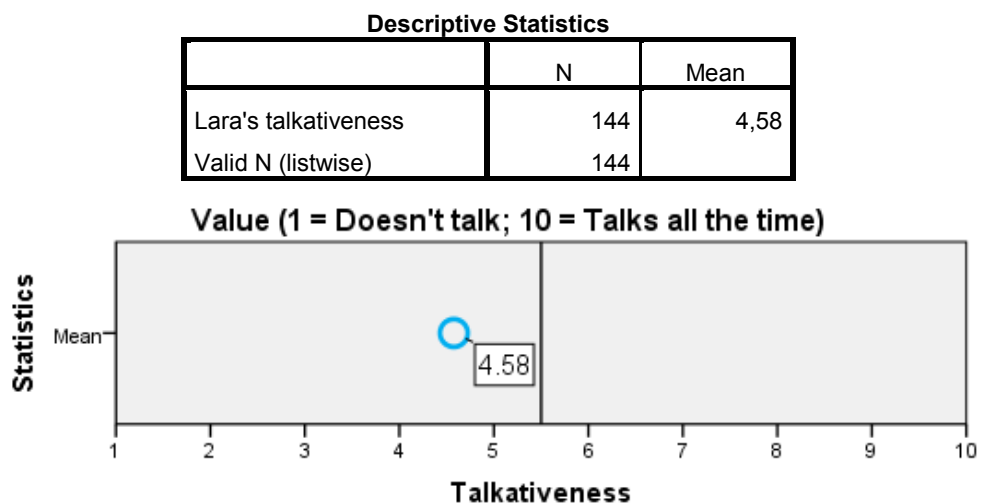
## V16 - Voice & expression

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean
Vulnerable & worried	144	1,93
Passionate & dreamy	144	2,72
Thoughtful & deep	144	3,36
Joking & above it all	144	3,37
Strong & threatening	144	3,83
Ironic & scathing	144	4,04

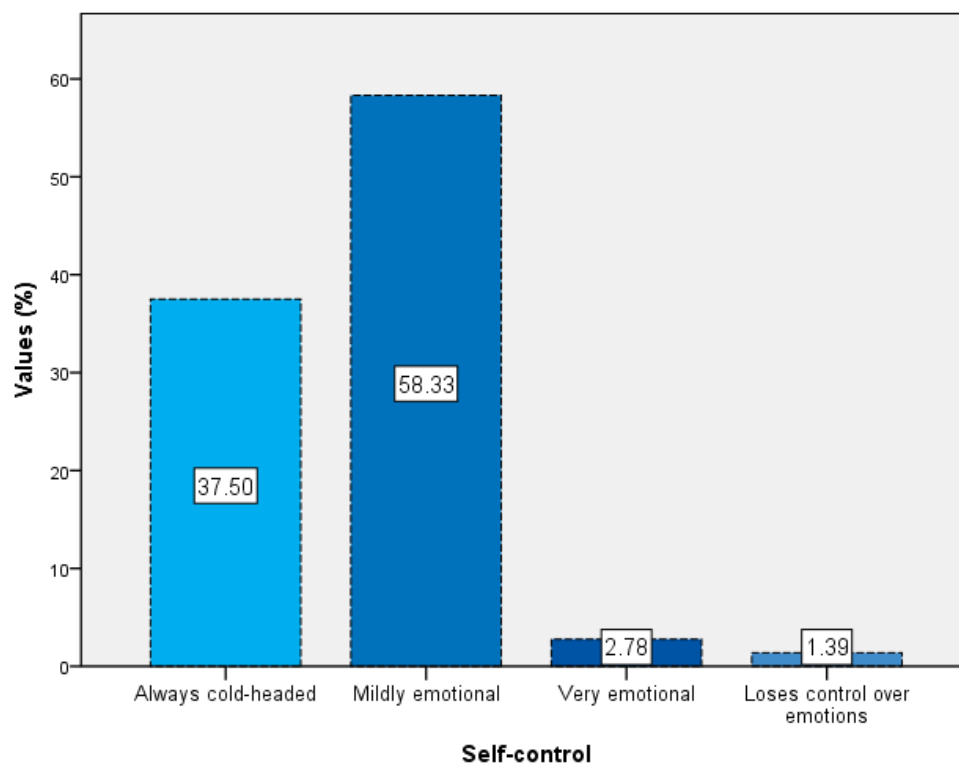


## V17 - Lara's talkativeness



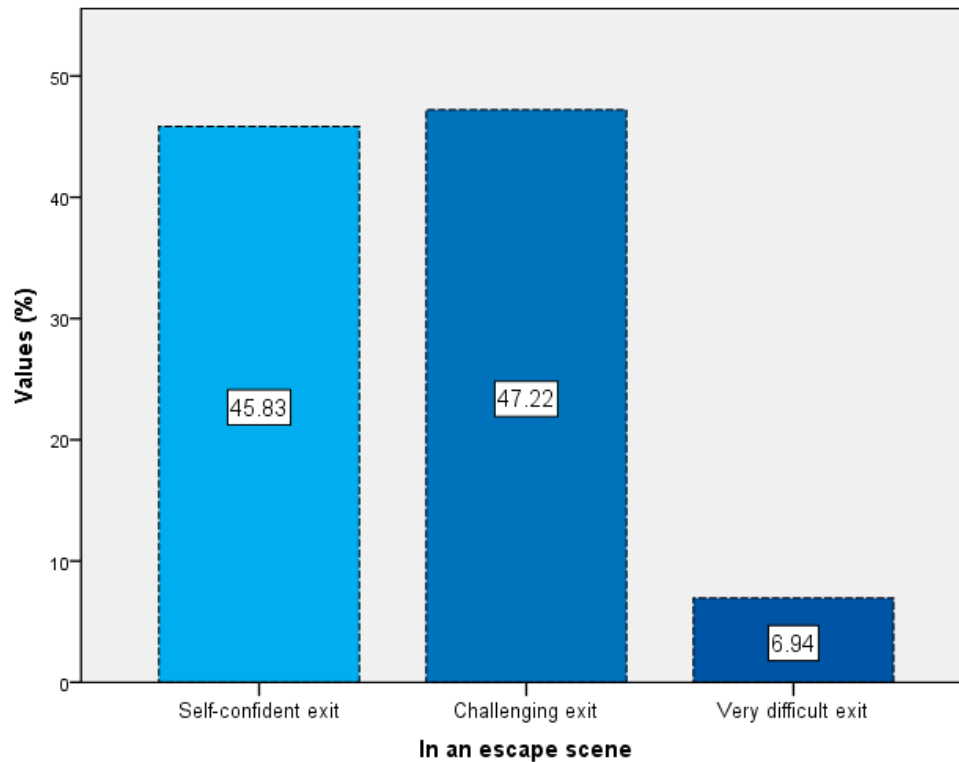
## V18 - Self-control

Self-control				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always cold-headed	54	37,5	37,5	37,5
Mildly emotional	84	58,3	58,3	95,8
Valid Very emotional	4	2,8	2,8	98,6
Loses control over emotions	2	1,4	1,4	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



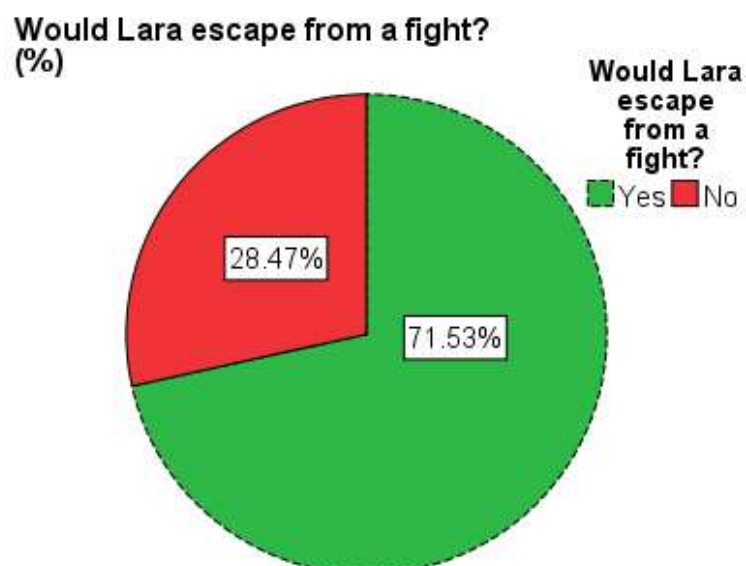
## V19 - Escape scene

In an escape scene				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Self-confident exit	66	45,8	45,8
	Challenging exit	68	47,2	93,1
	Very difficult exit	10	6,9	100,0
	Total	144	100,0	



## V20 - Would Lara escape from a fight?

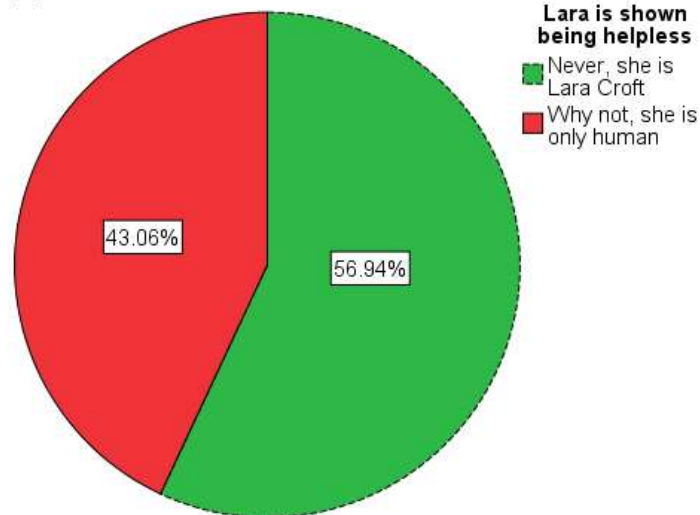
Would Lara escape from a fight?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	103	71,5	71,5
	No	41	28,5	100,0
	Total	144	100,0	



## V21 - Lara is shown being helpless

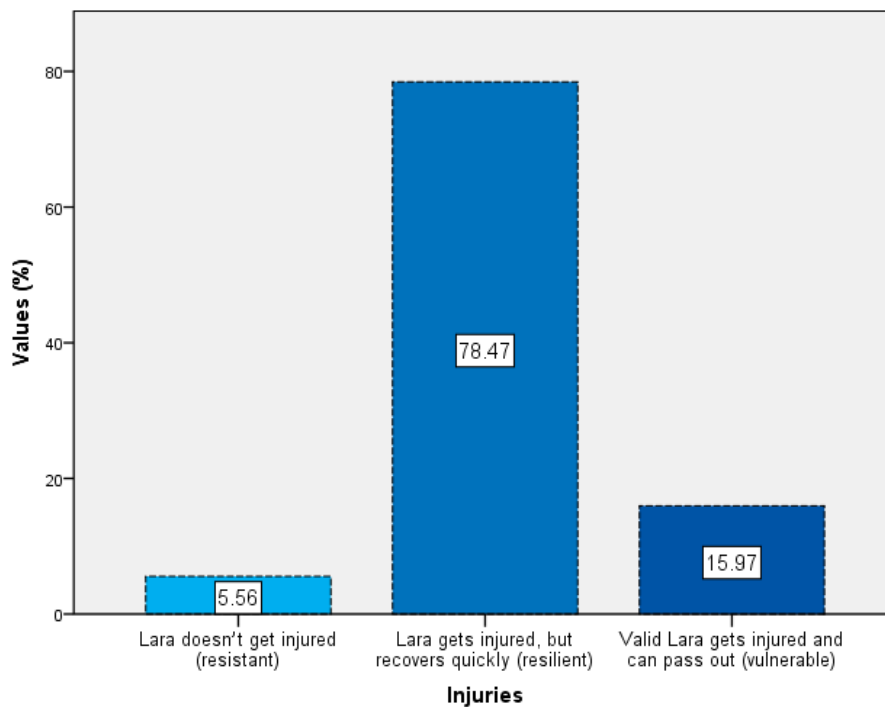
Lara is shown being helpless				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never, she is Lara Croft	82	56,9	56,9	56,9
Valid Why not, she is only human	62	43,1	43,1	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Lara is shown being helpless (%)



## V22 - Injury level

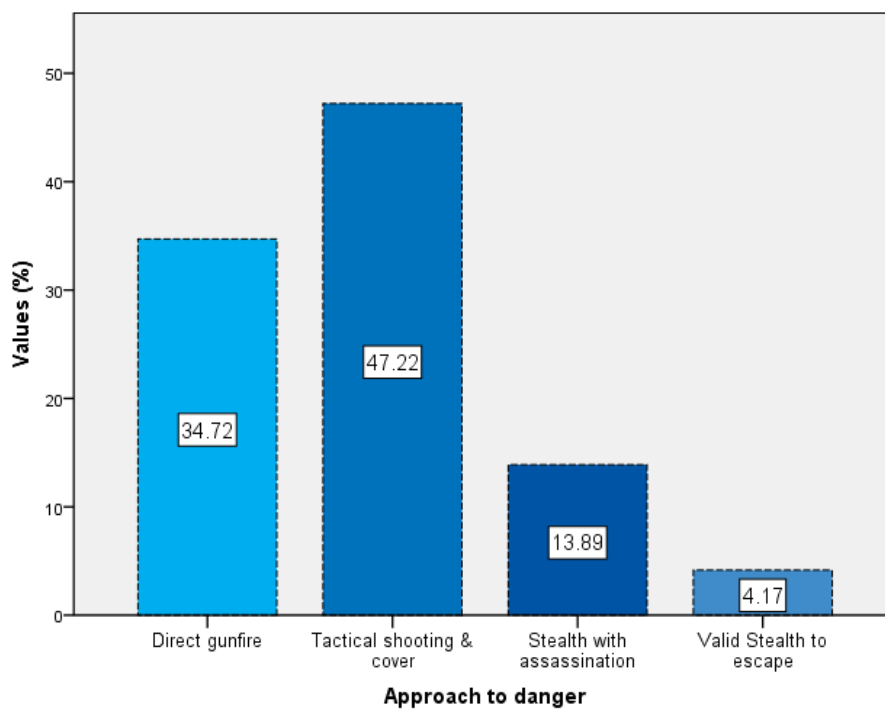
Injuries				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lara doesn't get injured (resistant)	8	5,6	5,6	5,6
Valid Lara gets injured, but recovers quickly (resilient)	113	78,5	78,5	84,0
Lara gets injured and can pass out (vulnerable)	23	16,0	16,0	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	





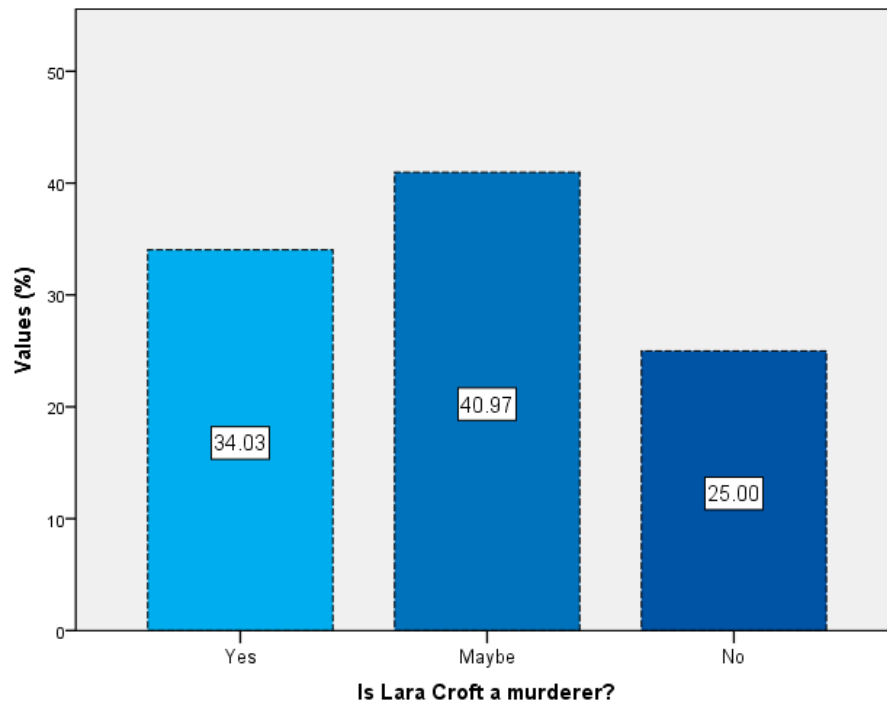
## V23 - Approach to danger

Approach to danger				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Direct gunfire	50	34,7	34,7	34,7
Tactical shooting & cover	68	47,2	47,2	81,9
Valid Stealth with assassination	20	13,9	13,9	95,8
Stealth to escape	6	4,2	4,2	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V24 - Is Lara Croft a murderer

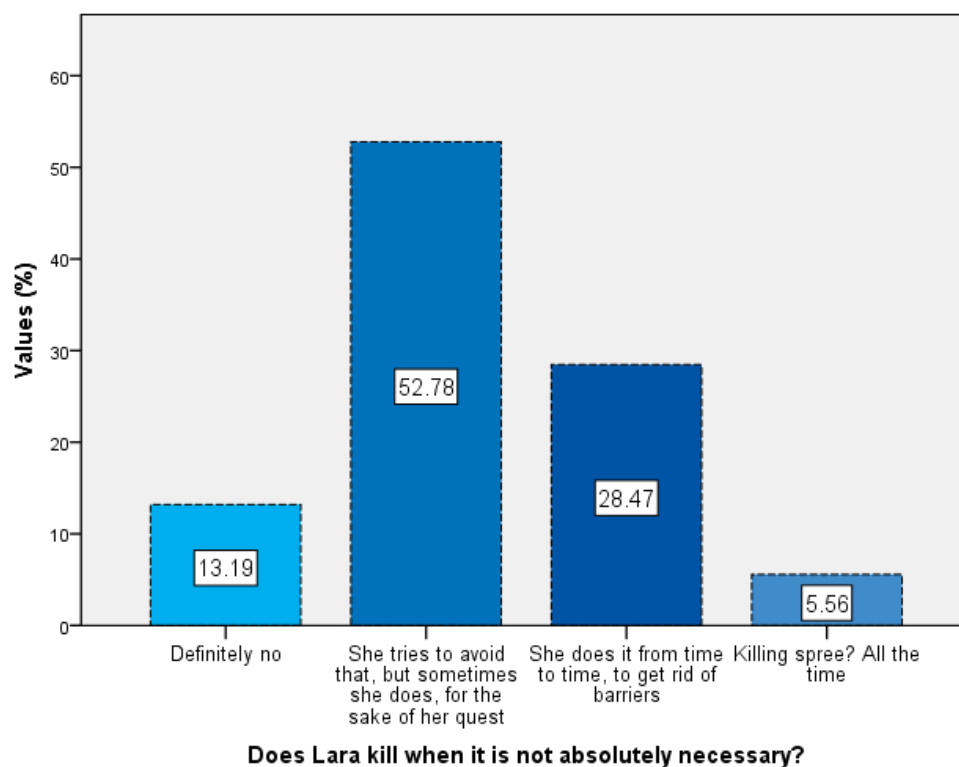
Is Lara Croft a murderer?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	49	34,0	34,0	34,0
Valid Maybe	59	41,0	41,0	75,0
No	36	25,0	25,0	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V25 - Does Lara kill when not absolutely necessary?

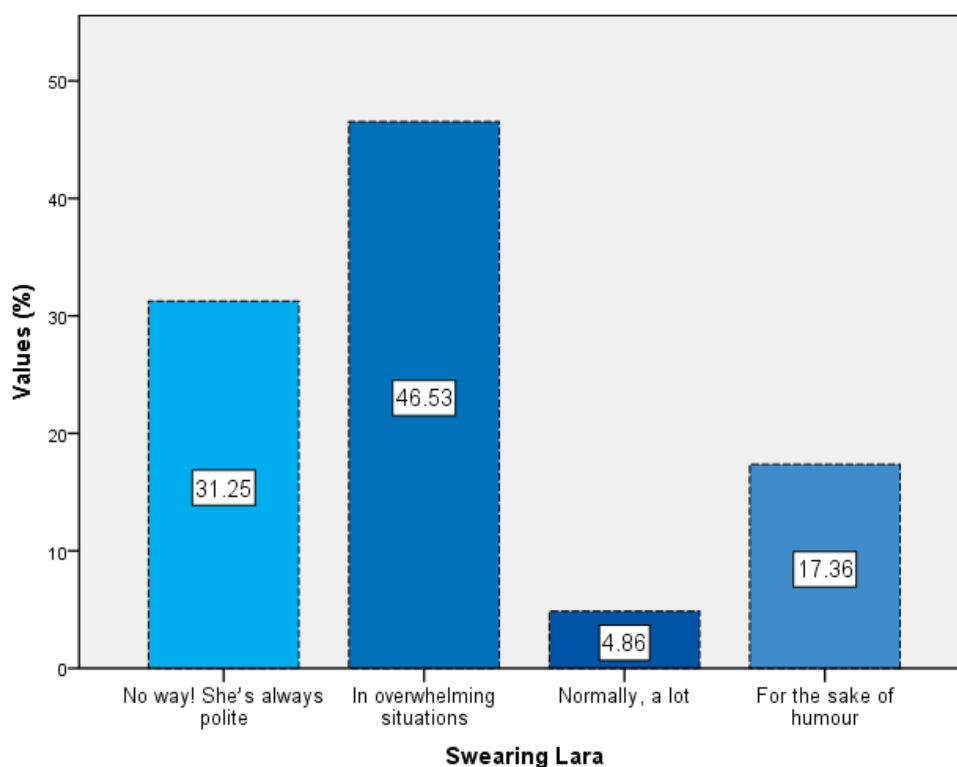
Does Lara kill when it is not absolutely necessary?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Definitely no	19	13,2	13,2	13,2
She tries to avoid that, but sometimes she does, for the sake of her quest	76	52,8	52,8	66,0
She does it from time to time, to get rid of barriers	41	28,5	28,5	94,4
Killing spree? All the time	8	5,6	5,6	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V26 - Swearing Lara

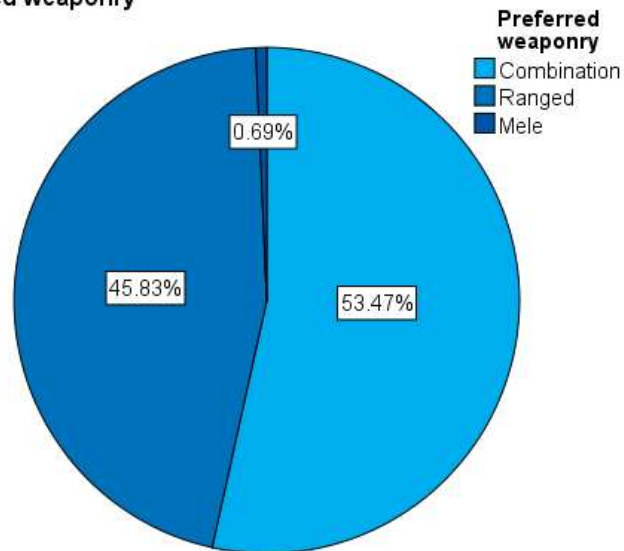
Swearing Lara				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No way! She's always polite	45	31,3	31,3	31,3
In overwhelming situations	67	46,5	46,5	77,8
Valid Normally, a lot	7	4,9	4,9	82,6
For the sake of humour	25	17,4	17,4	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V27 - Preferred weaponry

Preferred weaponry				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ranged	66	45,8	45,8	45,8
Valid Mele	1	,7	,7	46,5
Combination	77	53,5	53,5	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Preferred weaponry  
(%)

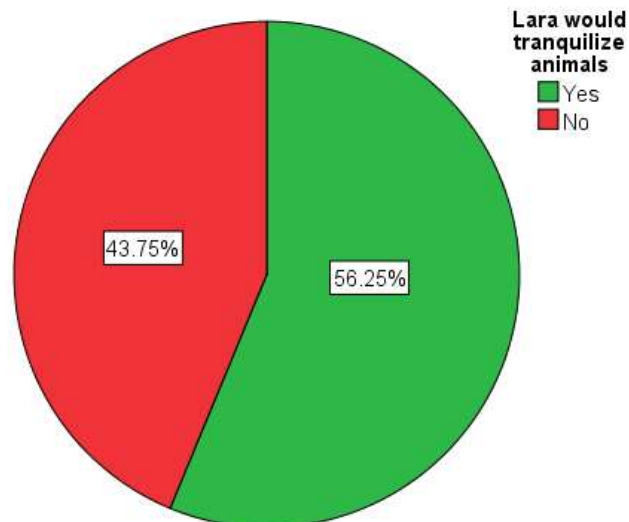


## V28 - Tranquilizing animals

Lara would tranquilize animals

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	81	56,3	56,3	56,3
Valid No	63	43,8	43,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Lara would tranquilize animals  
(%)

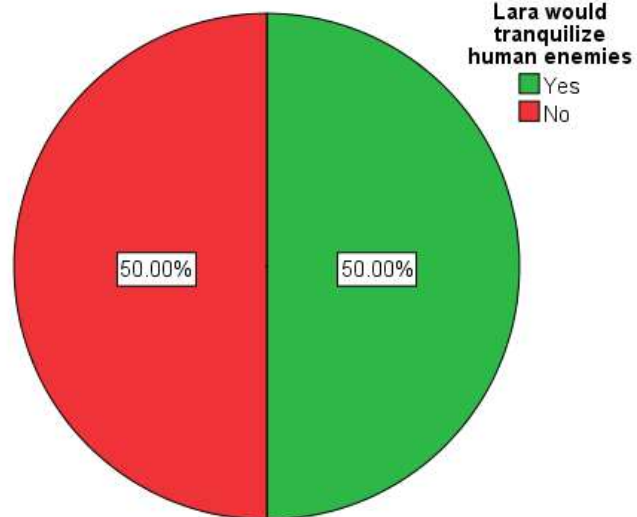


## V29 - Tranquilizing human enemies

Lara would tranquilize human enemies

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	72	50,0	50,0	50,0
Valid No	72	50,0	50,0	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Lara would tranquilize human enemies  
(%)

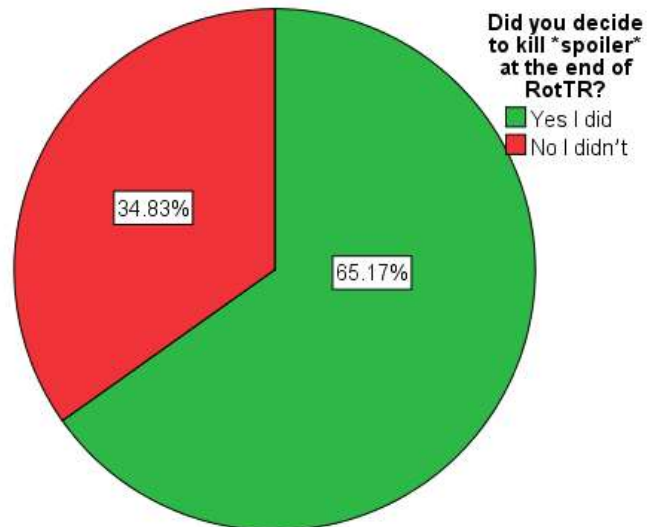


### V30 - Choice to kill in RotTR

Did you decide to kill \*spoiler\* at the end of RotTR?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes I did	58	40,3	65,2	65,2
Valid No I didn't	31	21,5	34,8	100,0
Total	89	61,8	100,0	
Missing I haven't played the last TR game yet	55	38,2		
Total	144	100,0		

Did you decide to kill \*spoiler\* at the end of RotTR?  
(%)



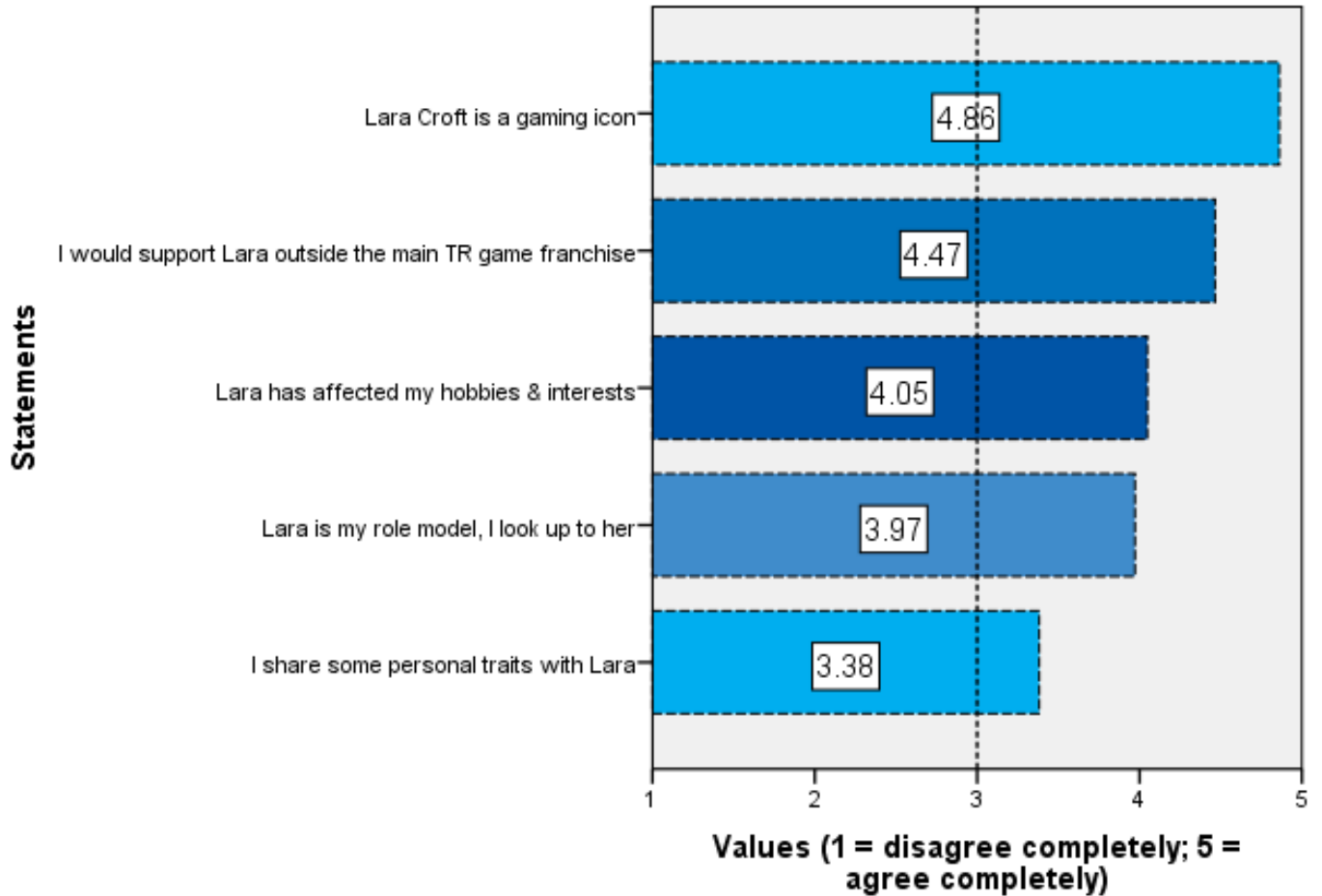


## V31 - Lara Croft, the icon

Role model

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lara Croft is a gaming icon	144	4,86	,496
Lara is my role model, I look up to her	144	3,97	1,234
I share some personal traits with Lara	144	3,38	1,128
Lara has affected my hobbies & interests	144	4,05	1,086
I would support Lara outside the main TR game franchise	144	4,47	,852

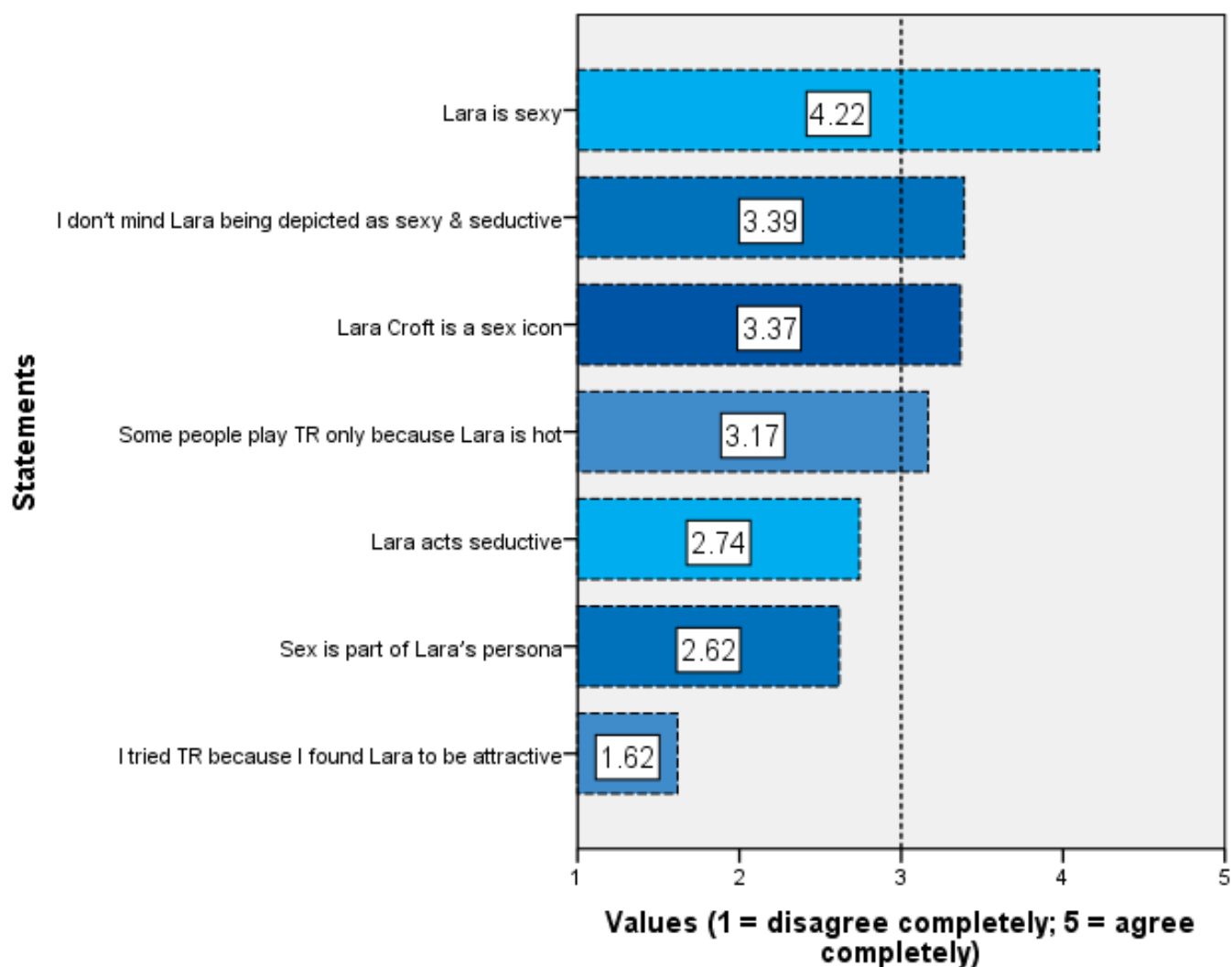
### Lara as a role model



## Lara the sex icon

Descriptive Statistics

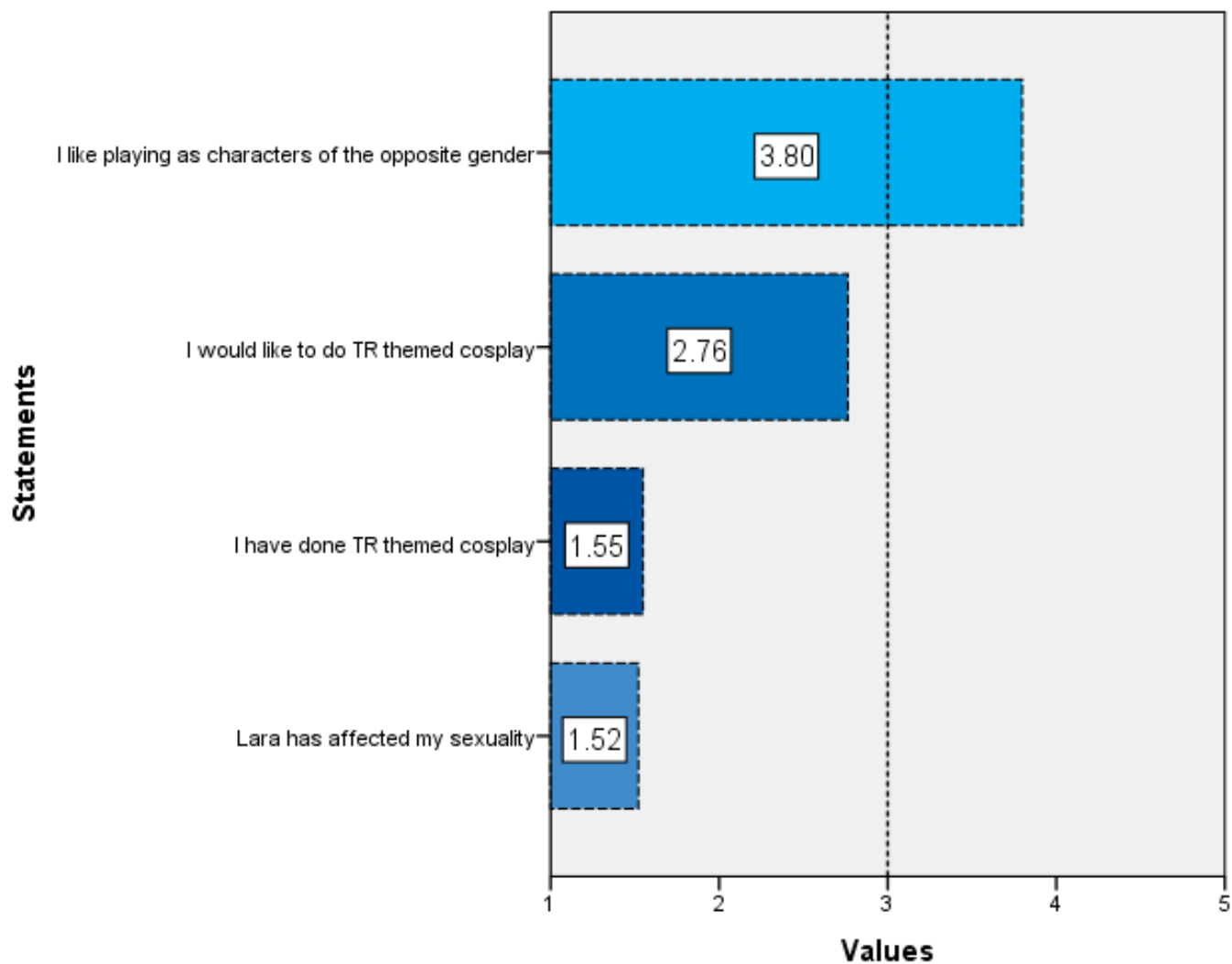
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lara Croft is a sex icon	144	3,37	1,261
Sex is part of Lara's persona	144	2,62	1,369
Lara is sexy	144	4,22	,957
Lara acts seductive	144	2,74	1,245
I don't mind Lara being depicted as sexy & seductive	144	3,39	1,328
Some people play TR only because Lara is hot	144	3,17	1,296
I tried TR because I found Lara to be attractive	144	1,62	1,109
Valid N (listwise)	144		



## Sexuality & gender

Descriptive Statistics

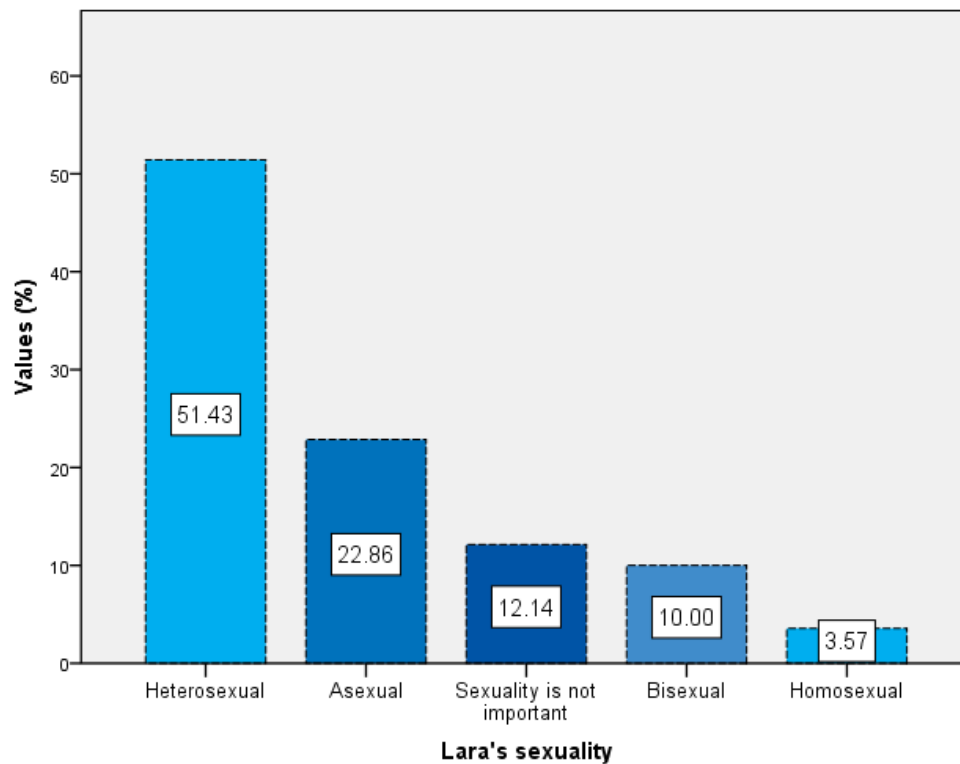
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lara has affected my sexuality	144	1,52	,968
I like playing as characters of the opposite gender	144	3,80	1,198
I have done TR themed cosplay	144	1,55	1,217
I would like to do TR themed cosplay	144	2,76	1,668
Valid N (listwise)	144		



## V32 - Lara's sexuality

Lara's sexuality

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Heterosexual	72	50,0	51,4	51,4
Homosexual	5	3,5	3,6	55,0
Bisexual	14	9,7	10,0	65,0
Asexual	32	22,2	22,9	87,9
Sexuality is not important	17	11,8	12,1	100,0
Total	140	97,2	100,0	
Missing Other	4	2,8		
Total	144	100,0		

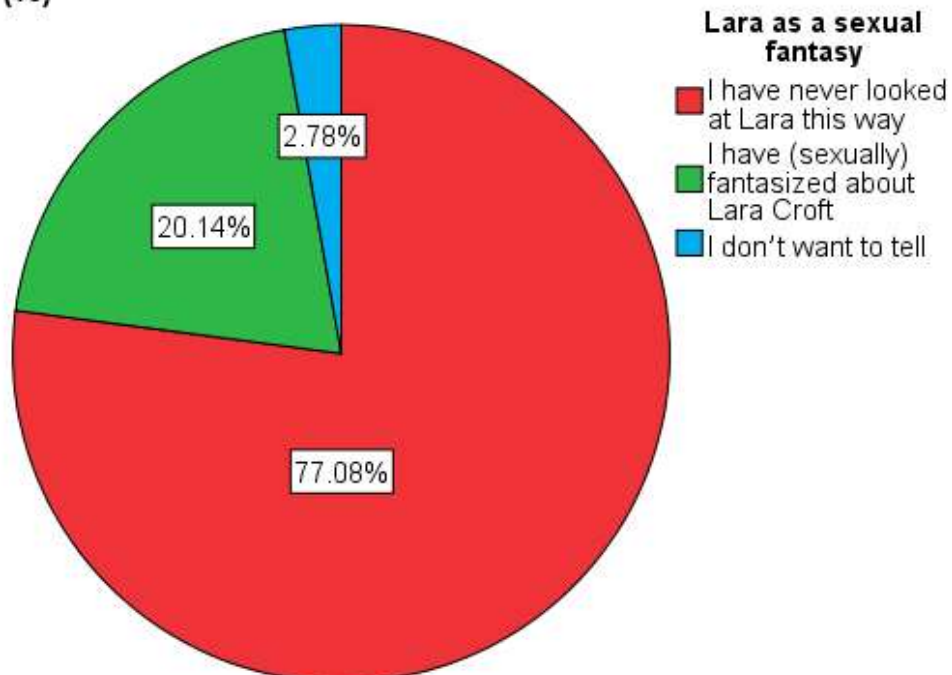


### V33 - Lara as a sexual fantasy

Lara as a sexual fantasy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I have (sexually) fantasized about Lara Croft	29	20,1	20,1	20,1
I have never looked at Lara this way	111	77,1	77,1	97,2
I don't want to tell	4	2,8	2,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

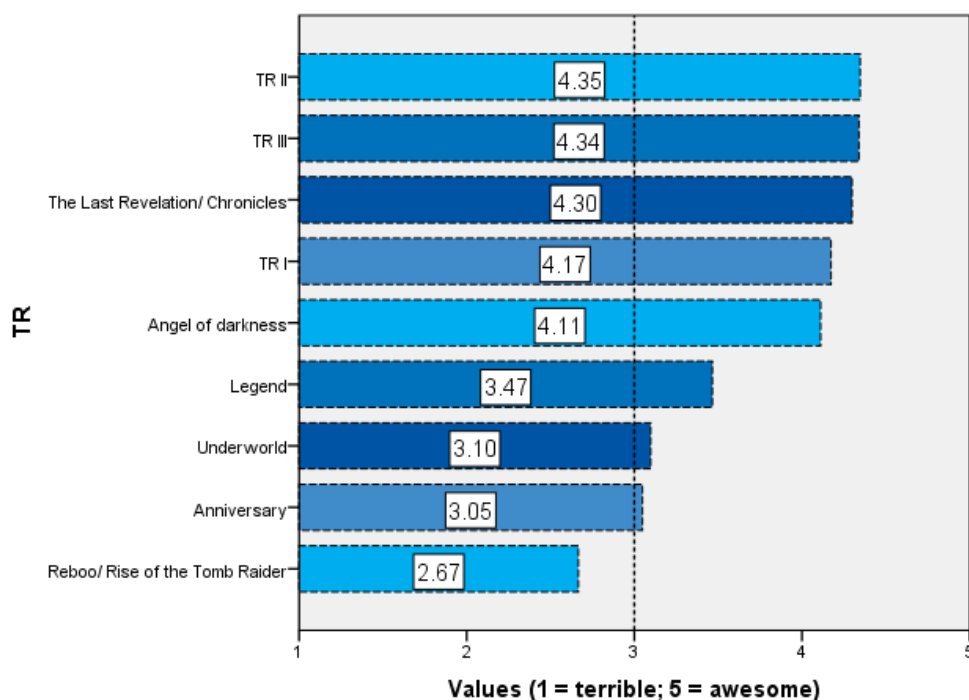
Lara as a sexual fantasy (%)



### V34 - Personality rank of each Lara iteration

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TR I	144	1	5	4,17	,934
TR II	144	2	5	4,35	,855
TR III	144	1	5	4,34	,854
The Last Revelation/ Chronicles	144	1	5	4,30	,862
Angel of darkness	144	1	5	4,11	1,269
Legend	144	1	5	3,47	1,194
Anniversary	144	1	5	3,05	1,225
Underworld	144	1	5	3,10	1,208
Reboo/ Rise of the Tomb Raider	144	1	5	2,67	1,439
Valid N (listwise)	144				

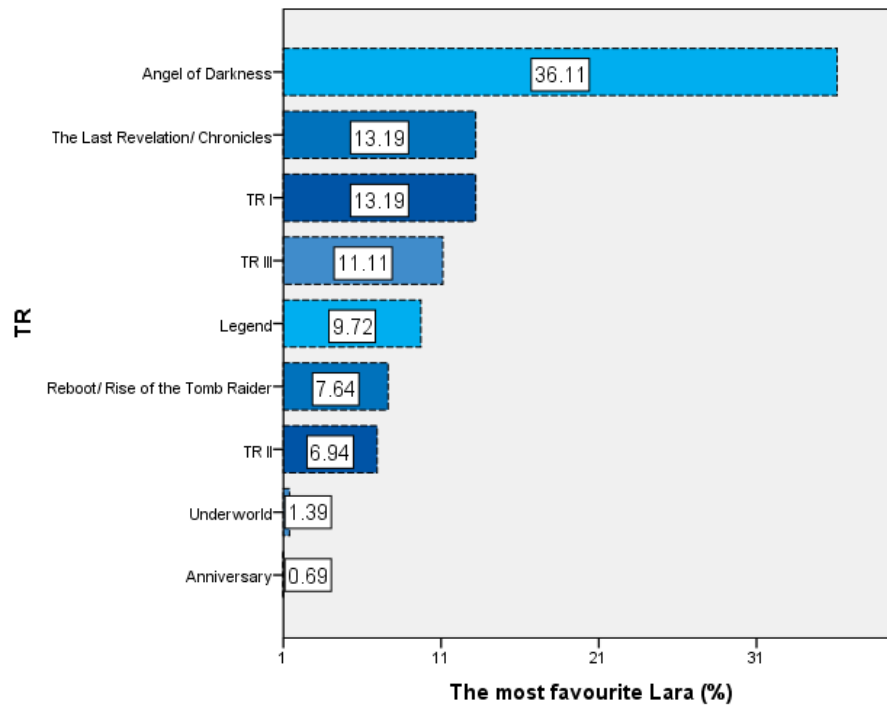
Lara's personality per title



### V35 - The most favourite Lara

Your most favourite Lara				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
TR I	19	13,2	13,2	13,2
TR II	10	6,9	6,9	20,1
TR III	16	11,1	11,1	31,3
The Last Revelation/ Chronicles	19	13,2	13,2	44,4
Angel of Darkness	52	36,1	36,1	80,6
Legend	14	9,7	9,7	90,3
Anniversary	1	,7	,7	91,0
Underworld	2	1,4	1,4	92,4
Reboot/ Rise of the Tomb Raider	11	7,6	7,6	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

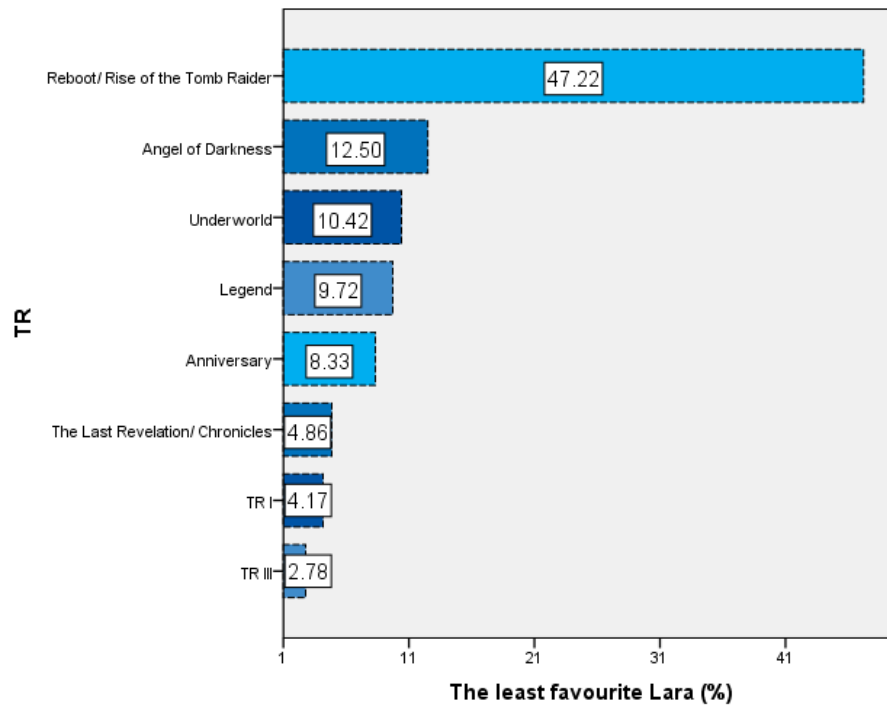




### V36 - The least favourite Lara

Your least favourite Lara

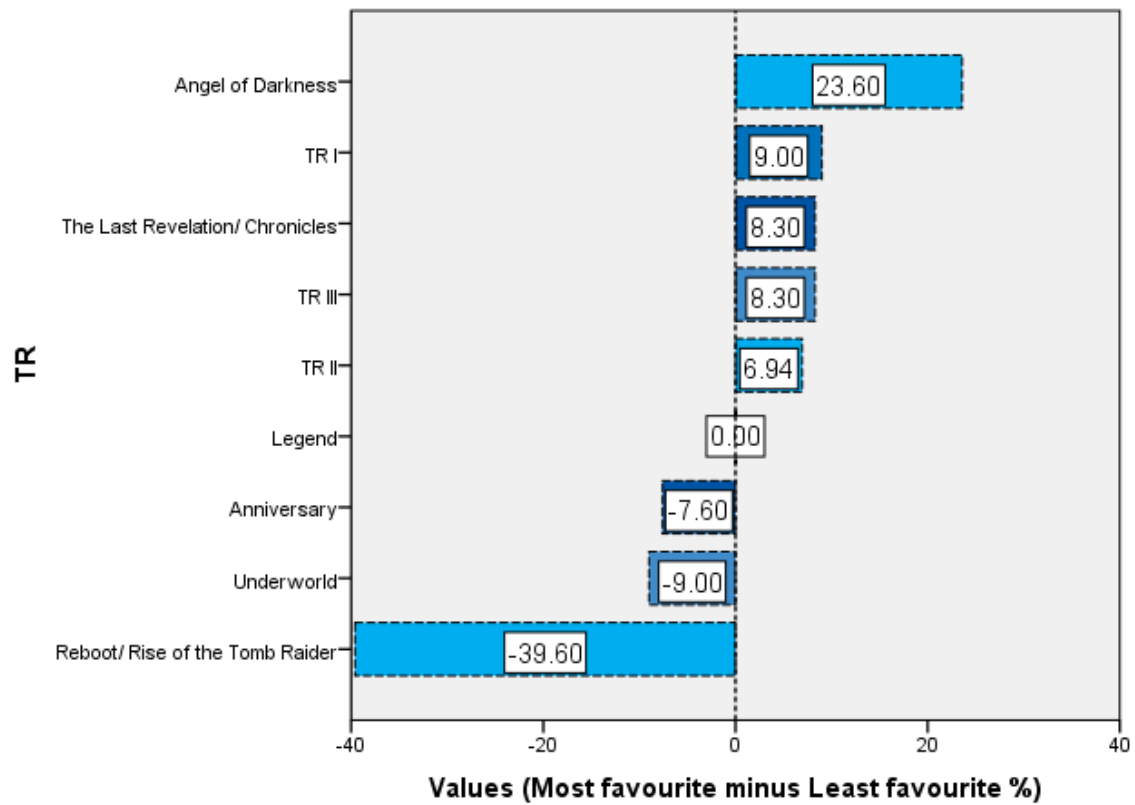
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
TR I	6	4,2	4,2	4,2
TR III	4	2,8	2,8	6,9
The Last Revelation/ Chronicles	7	4,9	4,9	11,8
Angel of Darkness	18	12,5	12,5	24,3
Valid Legend	14	9,7	9,7	34,0
Anniversary	12	8,3	8,3	42,4
Underworld	15	10,4	10,4	52,8
Reboot/ Rise of the Tomb Raider	68	47,2	47,2	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



### V35/36 - Popularity gauge

Your most favourite Lara			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
TR I	19	13,2	9,0
TR II	10	6,9	6,9
TR III	16	11,1	8,3
The Last Revelation/ Chronicles	19	13,2	8,3
Valid Angel of Darkness	52	36,1	23,6
Legend	14	9,7	,0
Anniversary	1	,7	-7,6
Underworld	2	1,4	-9,0
Reboot/ Rise of the Tomb Raider	11	7,6	-39,6

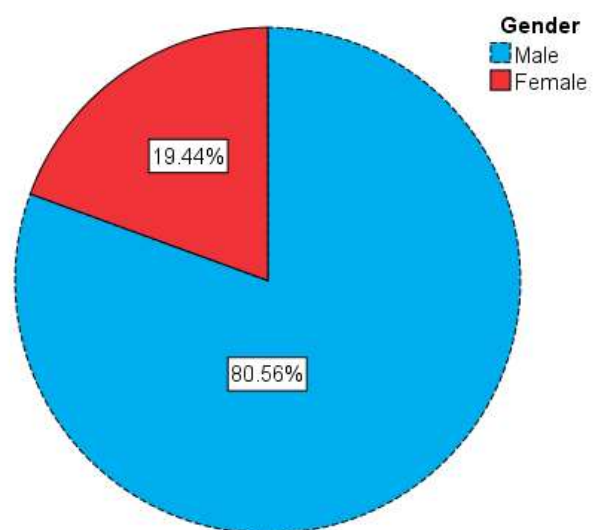
## Popularity gauge



## V37 - Gender

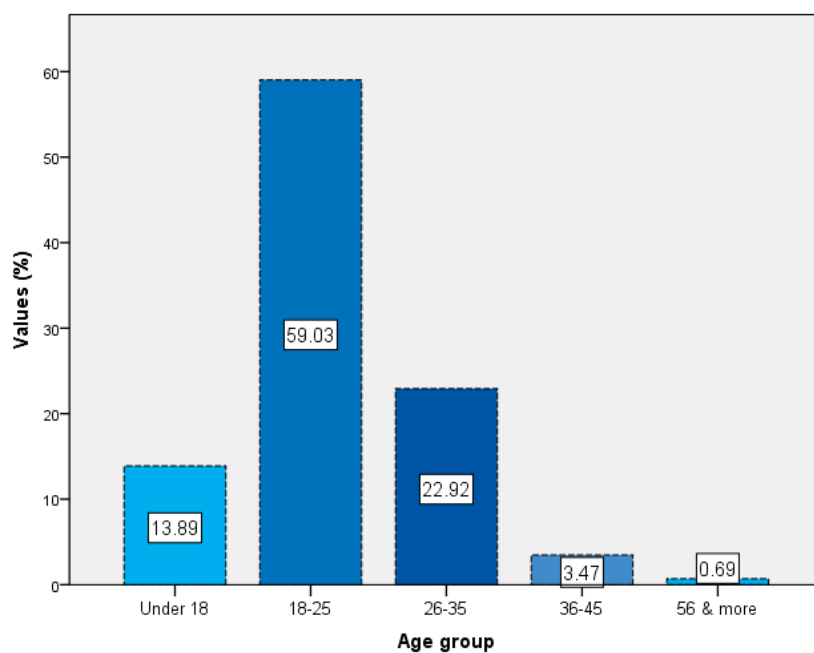
Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	116	80,6	80,6	80,6
Valid Female	28	19,4	19,4	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Gender (%)



## V38 - Age group

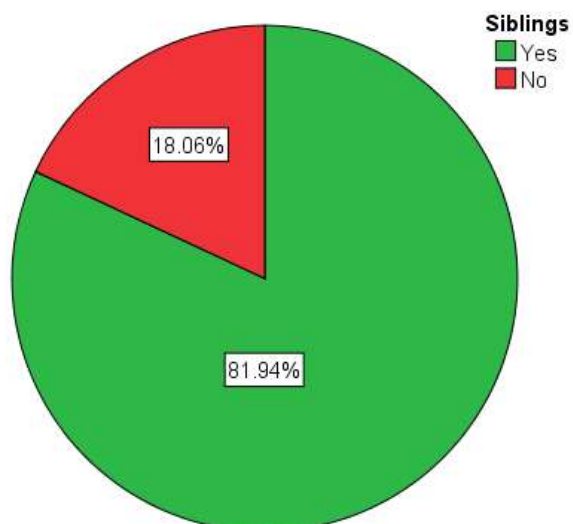
Age group				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Under 18	20	13,9	13,9	13,9
18-25	85	59,0	59,0	72,9
26-35	33	22,9	22,9	95,8
36-45	5	3,5	3,5	99,3
56 & more	1	,7	,7	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V39 - Siblings

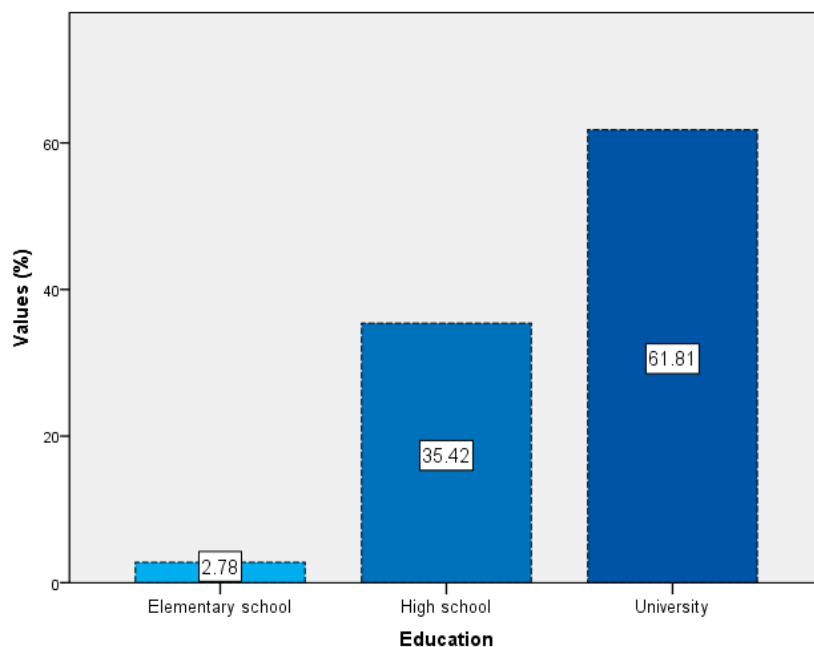
Siblings				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	118	81,9	81,9	81,9
No	26	18,1	18,1	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Siblings (%)



## V40 - Education

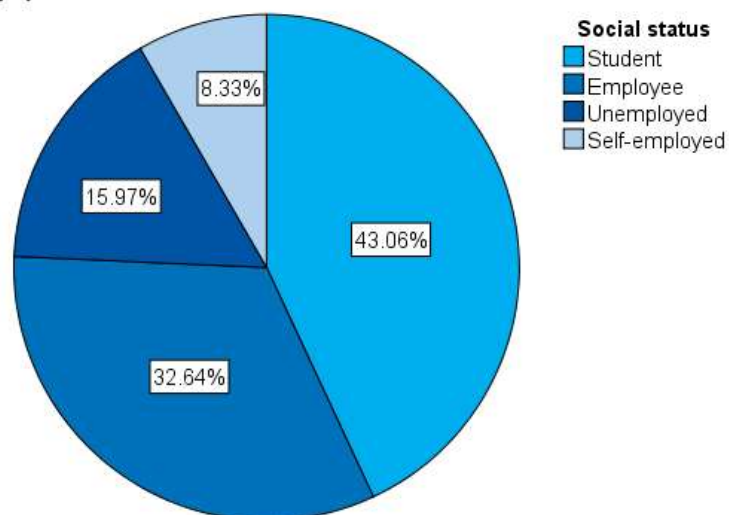
Education				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Elementary school	4	2,8	2,8	2,8
High school	51	35,4	35,4	38,2
University	89	61,8	61,8	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	



## V41 - Social status

Social status				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployed	23	16,0	16,0	16,0
Student	62	43,1	43,1	59,0
Valid Employee	47	32,6	32,6	91,7
Self-employed	12	8,3	8,3	100,0
Total	144	100,0	100,0	

Social status (%)

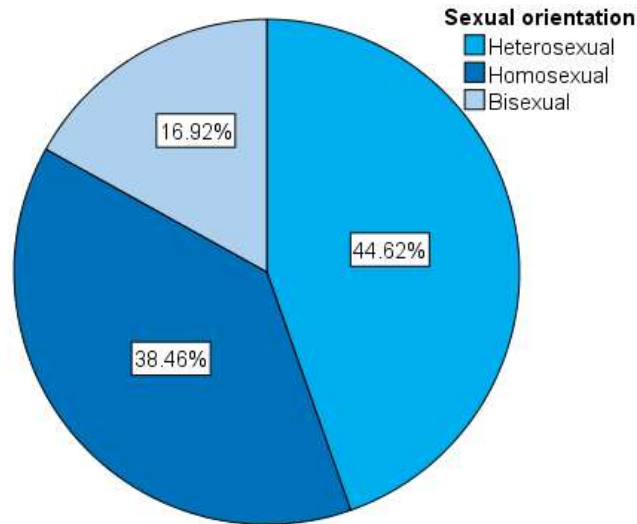




## V42 - Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Heterosexual	58	40,3	44,6	44,6
	Homosexual	50	34,7	38,5	83,1
	Bisexual	22	15,3	16,9	100,0
	Total	130	90,3	100,0	
Missing	I don't want to tell	12	8,3		
	System	2	1,4		
	Total	14	9,7		
Total		144	100,0		

Sexual orientation (%)



## V43 - Homeland

Where do you live?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	USA	31	21,5	21,7	41,3
	UK	28	19,4	19,6	19,6
	France	8	5,6	5,6	46,9
	Spain	8	5,6	5,6	60,8
	Germany	8	5,6	5,6	66,4
	Netherlands	5	3,5	3,5	55,2
	Hungary	5	3,5	3,5	72,7
	Australia	5	3,5	3,5	89,5
	Ireland	4	2,8	2,8	49,7
	Finland	4	2,8	2,8	76,2
	New Zealand	3	2,1	2,1	82,5
	Brazil	2	1,4	1,4	51,7
	Italy	2	1,4	1,4	69,2
	Sweden	2	1,4	1,4	77,6
	Serbia	2	1,4	1,4	79,7
	South Africa	2	1,4	1,4	83,9
	Brazil	2	1,4	1,4	95,1
	Portugal	2	1,4	1,4	96,5
	Austria	2	1,4	1,4	98,6
	Norway	1	,7	,7	50,3
	Turkey	1	,7	,7	67,1
	Georgia	1	,7	,7	67,8
	Indonesia	1	,7	,7	73,4
	Argentina	1	,7	,7	78,3
	Jordan	1	,7	,7	80,4
	Canada	1	,7	,7	84,6
	Gibraltar	1	,7	,7	85,3

	Where do you live?				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Syria	1	,7	,7	86,0
	Cyprus	1	,7	,7	90,2
	China	1	,7	,7	90,9
	Japan	1	,7	,7	91,6
	Malaysia	1	,7	,7	92,3
	Romania	1	,7	,7	93,0
	Switzerland	1	,7	,7	93,7
	Iran	1	,7	,7	97,2
	Singapore	1	,7	,7	99,3
Poland	1	,7	,7	100,0	
Total	144	100,0			